

University of Dundee

## DOCTOR OF SOCIAL WORK

**(In)visibility and missing persons**

**Desperately seeking certainty**

Apps, Graham

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**(In)visibility and missing persons:  
Desperately seeking certainty**

Graham Clive Apps

Professional Doctorate in Social Work

University of Dundee

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## **Signed declaration**

I, Joe Apps, as the candidate am the author of this thesis; that, unless otherwise stated, all references cited have been consulted by me; that the work of which the thesis is a record has been done by me, and that it has not been previously accepted for a higher degree. The thesis is not based upon joint research.

Joe Apps

30<sup>th</sup> September 2020

## Summary of contents (abstract in around 300 words)

This thesis is an exploration of (in)visibility and missing persons, specifically the impact of the police response to reports of missing persons and subsequent investigations into the disappearance of people. The literature review builds on a review of harm and missing persons in which invisibility was foregrounded and provides the context for (in)visibility in the thesis. (In)visibility is selected to represent a spectrum of visibility through to invisibility and indicate something of the dynamic nature of the concept of visibility – invisibility, as a dualism rather than as a binary. A qualitative methodology is used in the belief that quantitative research (particularly in the field of missing persons) on its own has the tendency to neglect the essence of life. The study is underpinned by a broadly constructivist ontology linked to an interpretivist epistemology. Using a grounded theory approach, a series of semi-structured interviews provided the data for analysis and a thematic network analysis is used to decode the evidence and to recode it into a series of conceptual and theoretical themes. Wrapped around the analysis and discussion of the data is a narrative based on an expert knowledge of the field.

The thesis contributes to the evidence base by providing knowledge in relation to policing processes which create (in)visibility in *missing*. It identifies and explains (in)visibility and missing persons and challenges a paradoxical nature of the police response to missing persons. Brought to attention is the markedness of absence; absence, like missing, is not a 'thing-in-itself', it is always in relation to others and a symptom of wider causal factors. The thesis answers the need to make visible missing people's absence and to examine what happens when they are gone.

The thesis is positioned as an interdisciplinary contribution in the field of policing studies with overlaps into social geography, sociology, psychology and other disciplines. Drawing on a range of views and argument, the research blends philosophical sensibility and a pragmatic eye revealing what might work in the policing response to *missing*; in doing so, the politics of *missing* are enhanced.

## Chapter One – Introduction

*“Nothing ... is anywhere ever simply present or absent. There are only, everywhere, differences and traces of traces.”* [Jacques Derrida, 1987, p.26]

### 1.1 Overview of the introduction

The introductory chapter covers a considerable amount of ground and a guide to the introduction setting out the overall aims of the chapter is provided here. The chapter starts with a description of my return to study as part of my policing journey. Having completed two degrees back-to-back in the early 1990s, there has been a significant gap before the resumption of my academic journey which is then set out along with a background and research context section. The following part of the chapter focuses on a preview of the design of a research grid and research questions with the latter section introducing the chapters of the thesis.

### 1.2 Police journey and returning to study: locating the thesis

In contextualising the thesis from the perspective of my police journey, this part starts with a short vignette describing a very prominent and deeply saddening missing person case that had a profound effect on me as a local police commander.

In September 2002, during one of our regular monthly management meetings at work, our detective inspector took a call to say that a body had been found in some local woods. Immediately, it was thought that the body may be that of a young woman missing from a nearby town for just over six months. Resolving the case took detectives from two police forces more than nine years and resulted in a serial rapist and killer being brought to justice. This case, more than any other in my thirty-three years-long police career, sparked my interest in missing people. When I later retired from front-line policing in 2008, the opportunity arose to lead the UK Missing Persons Bureau, then part of the National Policing Improvement Agency.

#### Case study 1: Missing person - Milly Dowler

Being a keen advocate of evidence-based practice from my police career which I carried through into my new role, I facilitated, guided, provided data and supported a range of research studies into missing persons and I was fortunate to be part of the research advisory group for the *Geographies of Missing People* research project, a seminal research study by Stevenson *et al.* (2013). In 2015, after more years of assisting others to do research in the missing persons sector, I realised it was time to return to study myself after a near twenty-year absence from academic work.

One of my colleagues at the Bureau was undertaking a professional doctorate and I saw how the flexible style and approach of the professional doctorate would suit my own circumstances. Rather than a fixed three or four years, full-time, doctorate of philosophy research study, the professional doctorate offered the opportunity to study alongside my professional career enabling me to continue working in the field but at the same time allowing me the space and time I needed for research and reflection.

Professional doctorate degrees tend to follow a similar format to other versions and comprise a year-long research methods course to orientate the new student in methodological approaches. This is followed by another year-long literature review leading into single or multiple research projects over the remaining three to four years with the expectation that the thesis would be complete within six years.

I choose to complete a professional doctorate degree at the University of Dundee and with the agreement of both Professor Nick Fyfe and external consultant supervisor Professor Hester Parr (University of Glasgow) I began a research project into harm and missing persons.

### 1.3 Academic journey and returning to study: background and research context to the thesis

This part locates my thesis from the perspective of my academic journey and introduces early work in my professional doctorate. It points to the dearth of scholarship in the field of missing persons and alludes to the general styles of policing research as ethnographies and evidence-based police work.

As a student returning to study after a near twenty-year absence from academic work, the first year of my professional doctorate degree course was taken up learning about and understanding research methods. This first year culminated in a written essay (Apps, 2016) providing a critical and comparative analysis of qualitative and quantitative approaches to research investigation, with a focus on the interdisciplinary area of policing, crime and missing studies, using exemplar studies as illustrations.

The second year of study required the production of a literature review. In continuing my focus on policing, crime and missing studies, and at the time

being concerned about the financial costs of missing persons (following the work of Shalev-Greene and Pakes, 2014), I wanted to explore wider costs in missing persons: would it be possible to estimate a value of the harm caused by missing persons? My literature review took the title: 'Harm and missing persons: challenges to and opportunities for the measurement of harm' (Apps, 2017). The review provided an understanding of harm: from a conceptual viewpoint; an assessment of the different ways in which harm may be measured; linked to the phenomena of *missing persons* from a policing perspective; and, considered a model or method by which harm in relation to missing episodes may be measured.

The review drew attention to the *politics* of missing persons (Edkins, 2011) and in doing so, discussed how *missing* may be reframed within a harm-based approach. The review asserted that it is possible to reframe *going missing* as a form of harm, experienced in different ways, by those connected to any one episode. Edkins argues that we need to do more to recognise missing people,

'Contemporary politics does not see the *person-as-such*, only the person as *object*. The way this objectification works becomes starkly obvious when people go missing: our systems of administration and governance cannot see the problem. ... However, for the authorities who are supposed to act, there is really no such thing as an irreplaceable person: one person is for most purposes equivalent to another of the same sort' (Edkins. 2011, p. viii, italics added).

This review responded to Edkins' call by offering a new kind of recognition through a consideration of the individual and collective harm involved in *being missing*. In elaborating missing episodes as harmful occurrences, I drew on the academic work in the following disciplines: critical criminology; sociology; social policy; psychology, human geography, and, specifically writing on 'everyday terrorism', Pain (2014).

In the conclusions to the review, aspects of invisibility surrounding *missing harm* were foregrounded and I sought to express the hidden nature of *missing harm*, particularly as represented by emotional difficulties and long-term mental health conditions. This unintended concealment has the potential characteristic of rendering measurement or valuation of harm in *missing* as 'measuring the invisible' (supervision, Hodson, 2017).

Throughout the thesis I refer to *missing* as an encompassing term to describe various elements in connection with the phenomenon of missing persons; the totality of missing people as the missing; the state of being missing; and, a sense of missingness that missing people may find themselves in, or more especially, the state of missingness described by families and friends of a missing person.

It was noted at the time of writing the review in 2017, that there was limited but improving knowledge to describe *missing*: statistics and data are imprecise and provide an incomplete picture of *missing*; also in comparison with other subject matters, at the time there was a paucity of research (Parr and Fyfe, 2012; Vo, 2015; Foy, 2016). *Missing* is defined so that it can be grasped or understood in a way by the police so that it can be reported, recorded and processed or investigated (Parr and Fyfe, 2012, p. 617). But the process of recording and managing *missing* introduces further opportunities to render people invisible. Missing persons are invisible in a number of other ways: in politics; in policy; in international agreements; in research; in statistics; and in publicity.

This theme of invisibility was subtly changed in emphasis to (in)visibility to highlight the duality of visibility/invisibility, not in a binary sense but representing a continuum of visibility with being completely unseen at one end and completely apparent at the other end of a spectrum, and provided a substantive focus for my third and subsequent years of study. I sought to investigate the impact of police actions around missing people on (in)visibility. A number of questions were obvious to ask: How can these aspects or characteristics of invisibility be explored? What is the impact of these characteristics of invisibility on missing and the harm created in missing? What does the invisibility do? How does it operate? What's the consequence of its operation? These questions led onto how might this consequence or impact be identified and assessed? And then onto what could be researched that would provide an idea of the impact? The ideas here, building well on Edkins' work, seemed interesting conceptually and practically but at the same time it was recognised that operationalising these concepts and questions might be more challenging in terms of a specific project and data collection strategy. The above questions have been condensed into an over-arching objective and a set of three research questions set out in the next section.

I have chosen the sub-title of the thesis as 'Desperately seeking certainty'. For me, this has a dual meaning, firstly, attempting to find certainty in the general messiness of qualitative research (Law, 2004) and secondly, in the police response to missing when officers seek to know everything in order to respond correctly to a missing incident. The following quote from Alan Rhees-Cooper (Chief Inspector and Staff Officer to the National Police Chiefs' Council lead for missing persons) illustrates the point well:

"When dealing with risk, and especially in firearms incidents, police officers and commanders accept that not all can be known, that risk cannot be properly established, ambiguities exist. In missing incidents however, absolute certainty is required; and I don't know why this is. How is it that we can operate with uncertainty in one business area of policing but not in another?" [Alan Rhees-Cooper, 2020]

Certainty is also sought by families of missing people, agonised by ambiguous loss (see, for example, Boss and Yeats, 2014), and drawn out by Katz and Shalev Greene (2020) in their article on constructing time in uncertainty. They argue that concepts of time undergo transformation in cases of extreme uncertainty, 'families of the missing construct different temporal regimes ... as parallel time, presumed dead time and perpetual time ... in negotiations over ambiguous categories ... that blur the life-death dichotomy' (2020, p. 1).

It is important to draw certainty back properly to the study of missing persons and perhaps one way of doing this is consider the evidence base for what works in policing missing people. Researchers are seeking to present some form of certainty for policing, to present research, underpinned by thorough and valid methods, that is valued for promoting and transforming police operational practice.

However, unlike other areas of scholarship on policing, the study of missing persons is in its infancy, and my specific lens on the thematic of (in)visibility is an innovative study. Invisibility has been touched on by Edkins (2011) and others (for example, Biehal *et al.*, 2003; Dewhirst and Kapur, 2015; and Slakoff and Fradella, 2019), but not fully explored from a policing perspective so it is useful here to draw out the position of the thesis as an interdisciplinary contribution in the field of policing studies with overlaps into social geography, sociology, psychology and other disciplines. More accurately, it is at the

intersection of several disciplines, with an ambition akin to McClennan's (2017) suggestion that, "true knowledge is exposed at the intersection of disciplines".

My thesis is not positioned as a traditional policing studies piece or a traditional social geography piece. Policing studies have generally fallen into 'ethnographies of policing' or latterly into the construction of 'evidence-based policing' (EBP), as set out by Sherman (1998) and others (for example, Weisburd and Neyroud, 2011). These authors see EBP as following the medical model of research with its gold standard on randomised controlled trials (RCT) despite Sparrow's (2011) very comprehensive and compelling critique of RCT approaches. Sparrow does not question the robustness of the methodology, more whether it sets the bar so high in terms of rigour and resources needed that it is of little practical value to the police operating in an environment where 'good enough evidence' might be generated in other ways that are less demanding and resource intensive. The narrowing of focus of police research methodology to experimental and quasi-experimental designs can mean that other methods are undervalued and that the inherent problems with RCTs in the field of policing are ignored (Wood and Bryant, 2016, p. 88). Most EBP work has focused on subject areas around patrol work, crime hotspots, domestic abuse and so on.

In a more holistic way, Lum and Koper (2017, p. 4), define EBP as 'not just about the process or products of evaluating police practices, but also the translation of knowledge into digestible and useable forms and the institutionalization of that knowledge into practice and policing systems'. In their framework, rigorous evaluation methods are partnered with surveys and social observations, tools couched as reliable research methods. However, apparently excluded are qualitative methods such as interviews and focus groups and their framework underpins most of the work conducted under the auspices of various EBP societies (as examples, the Canadian Society of Evidence-Based Policing<sup>1</sup> or the Society of Evidence-Based Policing UK<sup>2</sup>).

EBP has not moved into very specialist areas of policing, like missing persons, so my thesis contributes to knowledge in these fields, as traditional EBP

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.can-sebp.net/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.sebp.police.uk/>



techniques such as RCTs are not appropriate for this type of study. While RCTs are frequently used in doctoral studies as time permits this lengthy methodology, RCTs are complex to conduct. They require constant engagement over year or more with trial partners and more importantly, produce evidence of what works without evidence of why a particular trial works. RCTs are often used in conjunction with other research methods to produce fuller conclusions not available through RCTs alone (see for example, Drover and Ariel, 2015). My thesis enhances and enriches the qualitative evidence base more often seen in social science disciplines rather than in policing studies, through understanding of not just policing practice from the perspective of individual officers, but also understanding of the wider institutional context in which policing is undertaken.

#### 1.4 Research questions and research grid

As stated above, the substantive focus for my third and subsequent years of study was the impact of police actions around missing people on (in)visibility. As a former police officer, and now as the Head of the UK's Missing Persons Unit (formerly Bureau), my best source of data for my research would be people who had been missing, police force 'employees' and staff members in other agencies, like the charity, Missing People.

My thinking around the necessary research projects that would comprise the thesis work started with a research proposal in the form of research questions (RQs) and a research grid (shown in Appendix A) together with a synopsis of the proposed research. My overarching research objective was the exploration of the concept of '(in)visibility' in policing missing people. I designed three RQs as set out here:

- what is meant by (in)visibility in missing?
- what causes (in)visibility in missing?
- how does (in)visibility operate in missing and what is the impact?

Initially, I had thought that I could investigate (in)visibility as part of a short, 'case study' project of in which I could test out concepts and methods to be taken forward into a larger and qualitative study. The longer study intended to investigate, 'how well can a person be known?'. There is an aphorism used in

the world of missing persons and wider policing, most often expressed as, 'you don't really know someone, until you know them'. In Edkins' words, 'It turns out that in some profound sense a person was in any case unknowable and unknown. And that who people are is very much bound up with who they are in relation to others' (2011, p. viii). It is not a particular characteristic of the person that is missed but 'something singular, something unfathomable. ... The person cannot be pinned down: the person is missing' (2011, p. ix). This inability to know someone contributes to their invisibility. While not getting into existentialist arguments, this piece could explore how well people are known to their families and friend. Relationality to others is drawn out by Parr and Fyfe, who say:

'A missing person has to be noticed as not inhabiting their rightful place in order to be termed *missing*. This missingness may be *attributed*: someone may be reported or noticed as *missing*, but *not* experience their own missingness or absence. *Missing* is immediately a problematic term, then, and one used mostly by 'the left behind'. *Missing* is indelibly relational – gone *missing*, being missed – it is always *in relation*' (2012, p. 617, italics in original).

These arguments are present in Wayland (2015; and Wayland *et al.*, 2016) in her work on hope. Wayland also establishes that while people are missing, the family missing them may see the missing person in two ambiguous ways: the families' hope for the person exists in a liminal zone between being wanting a person to return and coming to terms with their permanent absence.

At the same time as thinking through my research plans, I started a professional collaborative project with Professor Fiona Gabbert at Goldsmiths, University of London on self-administered missing persons' report forms and memory recall which built on her earlier work on self-administered interviews for victims of crime. I saw an immediate link between Professor Gabbert's work and my own research project: the purpose of my research into the question of 'how well can a person be known?' could underpin the collaborative project with the intention for reports of missing persons to be more comprehensive. I was interested in how it might be possible to establish how well people are known to their family, friends and work colleagues. 'Missing' investigations are driven by knowledge of the missing person: their description, character, personality, habits and importantly places; so, the more that is known would surely be beneficial in locating the missing person quickly and safely. However, at the time, I was not

clear on how this could be developed into research questions or into suitable research methods, and instead this element of the research is developed in Chapter Three and introduced in the next part.

### 1.5 Introducing the chapters

My original literature review as part of my professional doctorate was entitled 'Harm and missing persons: challenges to and opportunities for the measurement of harm: a review of the literature' (Apps, 2017). Foregrounded in this work was the (in)visibility of missing persons produced by politics, statistics, government policies, operational police practices and the media (Edkins, 2011). I have selected the term (in)visibility to reflect and represent a spectrum of visibility through to invisibility and indicate something of the dynamic nature of the concept of visibility – invisibility, as a dualism rather than as a binary. Exploring this spectrum underlies the purpose of the thesis. The literature review in Chapter Two synthesises and assesses critically a selection of material to support the reader in understanding how the terms 'visibility' and, more importantly, 'invisibility' are used. It sets out *invisibility* from a theoretical and conceptual perspective, draws it into the world of policing and subsequently suggests how the theory and concepts may apply in policing missing persons thus providing a strong theoretical underpinning to the study.

Establishing the research project and the research project plan as a thesis are set out in full in Chapter Three – Methodology as one of seven parts to this extended chapter. The chapter starts with a precis of research methods relevant to the thesis and sets out my thinking to use qualitative methods: broadly, a constructivist ontology and interpretivist epistemology using grounded theory (after Strauss and Corbin, 1990) linked to thematic analysis (Attride-Stirling, 2002; Braun and Clarke, 2006 and 2013). The chapter also covers the methodology used to select research participants, conduct the interviews and later the transcription process. A description of the iterative coding process used is given as is a full methodology for the analysis of the data obtained. I have explained my positionality and reflexivity also in this chapter.

Chapter Four of the thesis presents an analysis of the data obtained from the research participant interviews and a discussion drawn from a series of nine interviews conducted with a range of police professionals of varying experience

and service operating in the field of missing persons as police search advisors, missing persons' co-ordinators, response officers and supervisory ranks. The analysis of the data, supported by quotes from the participants, is supported by a discussion, underpinned as necessary by theory, and also a narrative based on my own experience in policing and on my current role as the lead for the UK Missing Persons Unit, part of the National Crime Agency, to produce an explanation of the relevant issues alongside an illustrated analysis. The investigative cycle from the College of Policing Authorised Professional Practice on missing persons (College of Policing, 2017) is used as a core framework for the structure of the analysis.

A further thematic analysis of the participants' responses is produced in Chapter Five. This is based on three super-ordinate codes which could not easily subsumed into the investigative cycle framework: police culture; police language and procedural justice. The analysis follows the same format as the previous chapter and again is supported by an explanation and discussion. Police culture is seen to have an impact on the police response to missing persons as much as it affects other areas of policing. The language used by the police can be unhelpful when used carelessly or insensitively in conversations and correspondence with families of missing persons. It is suggested that the police response to missing persons may be enhanced using a procedural justice approach similar to that used in other police-public encounters. All three discussions assert that culture, language and procedural justice have a direct impact on visibility and invisibility of missing persons.

A summary and conclusions to the thesis are given in the final chapter. Chapter Six is structured as a re-visiting of my research questions and a summary of my answers to these questions. It draws attention to identity, personhood and agency as key factors in considerations around missing persons. The chapter presents potential implications for policy and practice and wider implications for theory as well as highlighting gaps in knowledge. A possible research agenda to guide future work in the field is also provided.

## Chapter Two - Literature review

### 2.1 Introduction

I have chosen to present a traditional, conceptual review to produce an understanding of (in)visibility that will lead the reader into how I am using the term in this thesis. Jesson *et al.* (2011, p. 76) suggest five variations of the traditional review, including chronologies, canons and major themes, which overlap considerably but with differences of purpose, and I have chosen a pyramidal literature review placing my research in its context. It is my intention to demonstrate how my research is shaped and framed by other literary contributions, policies and professional practices. Beginning with the wider context, the review will narrow in to focus closely on my topic indicating many of the potential issues, challenges and insights that I am bringing to my thesis following a guide on structuring literature reviews by Thomson (2016).

This review complements the literature review conducted in the second stage of my professional doctorate (Apps, 2017) which makes a contribution to the literature, not from the perspective of a single discipline but rather from a multi-disciplinary perspective in the emerging field of law enforcement and public health. The following key conclusions were made:

- in providing an assessment of *missing* and harm, attention was drawn to social harm as a construct of people's experiences rather than as a construct of the state
- framing *missing* as harm puts forward a potentially powerful political narrative and links to the experienced, longer journeys in *missing* that are seen by the police as short transitory events
- foregrounded were the aspects of invisibility surrounding *missing harm*, particularly as represented by emotional difficulties and long-term mental conditions
- *missing* and the harm generated by missing are inadequately understood and researched; they are surprisingly difficult issues with which to grapple.

Building on the fourth bullet point, the literature review drew attention to invisibility and foregrounded the way in which politics, statistics, government

policies, operational police practices and the media that assist in hiding or disguising missing people as Edkins points out,

‘Contemporary politics does not see the *person-as-such*, only the person as *object*. The way this objectification works becomes starkly obvious when people go missing: our systems of administration and governance cannot see the problem. ... However, for the authorities who are supposed to act, there is really no such thing as an irreplaceable person: one person is for most purposes equivalent to another of the same sort’ (2011, p. viii, italics added).

The literature review presented here synthesises and assesses critically a selection of material to assist the reader understand how I am using the terms ‘visibility’ and, more importantly, ‘invisibility’ and how I am locating my thesis of (in)visibility and missing persons in a range of wider academic contributions that consider how invisibility manifests itself in a variety of settings. It starts with a discussion on the dualism of visibility - invisibility and suggests that the dualism is related to the opposition of presence – absence and draws philosophical theory and research into the review. The review then assesses invisibility using three categories: socio-political; technological; and practical. Each of these categories can be seen to produce and reproduce invisibility in different ways.

### 2.1.1 Dualisms and oppositions

The dualism of invisibility-visibility is not intended as a binary concept in this review: being visible is not a strict alternative to being invisible. Complete or full visibility should be seen at one end of a spectrum of (in)visibility with complete or full hiddenness occurring at the other end. Between the ends of the spectrum lie many shades, patterns and explanations of (in)visibility. Invisibility is never complete, the impact or effect of the invisibility may always be seen, and even for completely visible things, there will be something unseen about them as the review will expose. I chose to use the term (in)visibility to represent this spectrum and the dynamic nature of the concept that underlies the purpose of the thesis.

I am suggesting that this dualism is related to one of the classical philosophical oppositions relating to presence and absence criticised by Derrida (1981). Plato set out that existence is structured in terms of oppositions such as between soul and body; essence and appearance; memory and remembrance (*mnēmē* and *hypomnēsis*) and so on. Oppositions are hierarchical in that one

side is privileged over the other: one is more valuable (Stanford Dictionary of Philosophy, undated). It is apparent in the Western world that visibility and presence take precedence over invisibility and absence. In Derrida's deconstruction, he reverses the hierarchy,

'... we are not dealing with the peaceful coexistence of a vis-a-vis, but rather with a violent hierarchy. One of the two terms governs the other (axiologically, logically, etc.), or has the upper hand. To deconstruct the opposition, first of all, is to overturn the hierarchy ...' (Derrida, 1981, pp. 41-42)

In the world of *missing*, the opposition is reversed to allow invisibility and absence to take precedence. For families missing a loved one, absence is privileged and the search for the missing person takes over lives; their whole focus (drawn from many family stories) is on missing the person and the absence of that person in their lives. Memories of the missing person are perhaps equal to remembrance. This reversal is an interesting twist in the usual valuations of the presence-absence dichotomy.

Brightheni (2007) draws attention to visibility suggesting it exists at the liminal zone between the two domains of 'aesthetics (relations of perception) and politics (relations of power)' (p. 324). He compares the powerful symbolism of light as the obsession of physics as well as the markedness of light in religious as well as in secular cultures, concluding that light is not just simply visible, it constitutes a form of visibility. The notion of how we perceive things and politics is examined now later in the socio-political issues section.

Turning to invisibility and absence instead, Meier *et al.* (2013) demonstrate the relevance of absence in its social and spatial settings. In concentrating on the phenomenon of absence, which does not claim a physical presence, or which is missing or unobservable, the authors criticise the usual subjects or areas for research. The social sciences and the humanities have followed Platonism and been concerned mainly with what is present and observable, what is available to be touched and measured. Meier *et al.* resist the tendency in cultural geography to focus on 'the importance of things, matter and processes of embodiment' (2013, p. 423) too, and their article, which highlights the tensions created in the field, describes concerns 'with the down-to-earth, the banal or the everyday ... and a conviction that the mundane is also entangled with representational elements, with processes that involve more than mere matter'

(2013, p. 423). Here the authors argue that absence connects the dichotomy and use, as an example, perspectives on an afterlife, which has no physical presence, are associated with ordinary aspects of daily life which do. By observing the routine and humdrum, absence and invisibility will be perceived.

The notion of researching the everyday is picked up in Scott (2018) in her article on the sociology of nothingness which responds to Brekhus's call for a 'sociology of the unmarked'. A sociology that follows Derrida's deconstruction of oppositions and shifts focus from 'positively defined somethings and somebodies to negatively defined nothings and nobodies' (2018, p. 4). Brekhus (1998) draws on the linguistic terms of 'marked', usually empirically unusual, politically salient, ontologically uncommon or morally critical which demand disproportionate attention so that researcher attention focuses on the extreme, exotic, unusual and deviant and the 'unmarked'. The unmarked remains unexamined and is taken for granted as normal and is characterised by an absence of emphasis. As with oppositions, in contrasting pairs of marked and unmarked words or formations, marked is regarded as superior, while unmarked denotes neutrality (1998, p. 38). Markedness in linguistics was an original theory by Trubetzkoy and Jakobson and for a short explanation, see Zhang and Tian (2015).

It seems difficult to disentangle absence from presence in their opposition or contrasting pairing as can be seen in Frer (2013). He criticises an understanding of absence that mainly locates it and its relation to presence in self-contradictions and in the deconstruction of consciousness and direct experience of the human world. He says that,

'Absence as a concept is often discussed in connection with presence, where both are seen sometimes as opposites, sometimes as partners. In the case of Derrida's criticism of Husserl, absence is presented as the category of the trickster, the devious category that undermines the almighty, shining presence; the category that lurks in the inevitable shadows cast by presence's radiating glare.' (Frer, 2013, p. 434.)

According to Frer, an under-researched aspect of absences is that they are experienced: the experiential quality of absence points to a connectedness to time, places and to persons. One particularly strong aspect of the experience is the emotional quality of the feeling of loss, and the experience of a time of year, places and occasions for remembering.



The effects of the absent person extend well beyond the person themselves to their wider social network (Henderson and Henderson, 1998). In discussing how the family and friends of missing persons found their lives disarranged by the ghost among them, Hogben (2006) points to the temporal destabilisation and desynchronisation that occurs as relationships are adjusted between a shared past and a new and uncertain future (p. 338). While the missing person is physically absent, they are also psychologically present (Boss, 1999). Decisions on whether to mark birthdays or anniversaries are full of ambiguity (Sacks, 1987) and symbolic implications of both doing so (feeling the absence all the more intensely) and not doing so (acknowledging that the person might never return) fill the temporal vacuum, once occupied by the person, with acts of waiting, worrying and hoping. While unseen, absence creates something to observe (Scott, 2018, p. 12).

To bring the discussion into the realm of the everyday, rather than the theoretical and conceptual, dictionary definitions of invisibility include a list: the inability to be seen due to transparency; hiddenness or very small size as in wearing a magic cloak to make a person invisible; the state of being ignored or not taken into consideration as in the near visibility of minority viewpoints; and, it can also mean not physically existing but having a noticeable effect as in the invisible barrier between affluent suburbs and the poorer townships beyond (Chambers, 2014).

Immediately on thinking about invisibility or being invisible, images from HG Wells' classic book and film adaption, 'The Invisible Man' spring to mind (see illustration below), but this literature review seeks to unravel the second two parts of the above definition: the state of being ignored or not taken into consideration and not physically existing but having an effect.

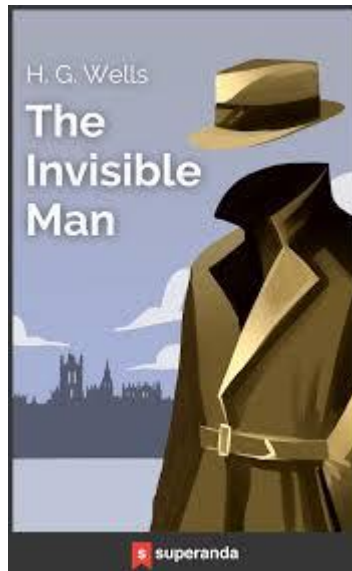


Figure 1: 'The Invisible Man' book cover illustration by Monica Vitali for Superanda Books

## 2.2 Invisibility as socio-political

The state of being ignored can be assigned to symbolic erasure: the under-representation of members of a particular social group or in particular social roles and contexts, for example, the invisibility of homosexuality onscreen under the Hays Code<sup>3</sup> until the 1960s (Chandler and Munday, 2011). The state of being ignored can also be understood as representational erasure and cultural invisibility according to Elliott-Groves and Fryberg (2017) who state that portrayals of contemporary Indigenous people in North America are poorly mirrored in public institutions. Representations are 'rare and generally inaccurate, highlighting the erasure of Indigenous people from current discourse' (2017, p. 1). The authors argue that colonialism by European and neo-American peoples as settlers is responsible for this erasure. Cultural invisibility and widespread negative stereotyping are two of the serious consequences of representational erasure and attempts to construct normal identities by young Indigenous people can be compromised or denied entirely.

The bias or stereotyping experienced by Native Americans also manifests as 'omissions, which are aspects of the world that are invisible or intentionally left out of the public conscious' (Fryberg and Eason 2017, p. 554). The authors quote as an example, the Church Rock uranium mill spill in New Mexico in July

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<sup>3</sup> A set of censorship guidelines for the United States motion picture industry in force from 1930 to 1968.

1979, and the largest radioactive accident in the history of the United States, which resulted in the Navajo nation being without clean water for 41 years. Despite the seriousness of the incident, the Church Rock disaster received little media attention in direct contrast to broad and international media coverage the Three Mile Island nuclear meltdown in Pennsylvania received some four months earlier. So, we see invisibility conceptualised as a lack of representation or misrepresentation of a social group (Fryberg & Townsend, 2008 cited in Sesko and Biernat, 2017) as well as the failure of authorities to investigate properly the disappearance of Indigenous women (Pratt, 2005).

In framing invisibility as a form of discrimination that may characterise groups that do not fit into normalised archetypes, for example, White men and women and Black men, social psychologists such as Sesko and Biernat (2018) have suggested that Black women are invisible in relation to these groups. They argue that 'Invisibility may be evident in perceivers' treatment of Black women as interchangeable and indistinguishable, such that their individual faces and voices go unnoticed and unheard' (2018, p. 141-2).

According to Sesko and Biernat feminist scholarship has focused on the historical invisibility of Black women in the United States and use, as an example, their relative absence from reflections in civil rights and suffragist movements, where instead, Black men and White women predominate leaving groups such as Black women struggling to be seen or have their voices heard (2018, p. 142).

Moving to the world of migration, the movement of people from war torn countries such as Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq and Yemen to Europe can be used as another example of visibility and invisibility. The public discourse on migration quickly changed after tragic events in the Mediterranean when so many people made fatal journeys from Turkey to Greece and from Libya to Italy (International Organization for Migration, 2017). 'Refugee' became a safe and consensual alternative for the discredited term of 'migrant', "We should not use the word migrant. Migrant is a political word that used to take away the real status of these people. They are refugees." (Bono, quoted in Apostolova, 2015).



Figure 2: Refugees in boat. Image courtesy of New York Times

(<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/26/magazine/refugees-mediterranean-rescue.html>)

The linguistic and symbolic distinction between refugees and migrants is useful from a political perspective, however, and spurred on by newspaper headlines designed to create a rift in the minds of the public. Distinguishing between economic migrants and political migrants (refugees) has determined a proliferation of unhelpful binary categories of migrants that have been invented, privileged and disputed in political discourse today, ‘the “good” vs. the “bad” migrant, the legal vs. “illegals”, the *Gastarbeiter* vs. the “asylum seeker”, the “refugee” vs. the “migrant”, the “refugee” vs. the “invader”, the “refugee” vs. the “terrorist” (Apostolova, 2015). In these binary categories, it is possible consider the effects of (in)visibility, good, legal and guest workers should be seen and welcomed but illegals, asylum seekers and invaders are to be rejected and hidden in the public mindsets.

The introduction of false differences between migrants and refugees, with the effect of disguising the refugees and treating them as though they are unwelcome economic migrants is another act of symbolic erasure. In the words of Crawley and Skleparis (2017), this form of categorical fetishism, despite significant academic critique, ‘continues to treat the categories ‘refugee’ and ‘migrant’ as if they simply exist, out there, as empty vessels into which people can be placed in some neutral ordering process like a small child putting bricks into a series of coloured buckets’ (2017, p. 49).

In a similar and fairly consistent way with other governments (see, for example, Sigvardsdotter, 2013 work on the experience of missing absence of migrant people in Sweden), the fact that the British Government has ignored the issue of missing migrants since at least 2008 is not surprising. It has been an invisible

issue overlooked in Government policy and practice despite much work by the UK Missing Persons Unit and others in the field (unpublished reports, meeting minutes, etc. between 2008 and 2016, under the then Missing Persons Strategic Oversight Group). In one 2008, senior Home office meeting on missing migrants' proposals to respond effectively to migrant children particularly were considered. No progress on implementing the proposals was made until 2017 with the introduction of Operation Innerste<sup>4</sup> by Hertfordshire Police (Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration, 2018). Converting proposals to tackle issues surrounding missing migrants into concrete actions has been problematic for a number of reasons. Firstly, understanding the issues from data perspective when policing and immigration authorities have used disparate and conflicting recording categories to describe the migrants themselves. Secondly, establishing agency responsibilities for action has not been straightforward with contrasting appetites to deploy resources effectively. Lastly, the design of a suitable and enduring policy framework has proved elusive. Even now, the increasing numbers of migrant making the hazardous journey from the Middle East to the United Kingdom continues to expose a policy vacuum and ineffective operational action (see for example, Grierson and Willsher, 2020). Thus, missing migrants are a socio-political category which has had and continues to have the consequence that people become hidden and systemically remain hidden through by politicised policing capacity in systems.

Missing migrants may also be caught up in the trafficking of human beings and to some extent are not missing persons but enforced migrants for the purposes of slavery. In his book, *Invisible Slaves*, Hauser (2017) discusses slavery across the world through a critical engagement with contemporary debates about precariousness, lack of independence and socio-legal status, to reframe slavery as a modern-day crisis rather than a legacy of the 1700 and 1800s. The invisible nature of slavery is exposed, from organised crime gangs operating under a cloud of encrypted conversations to the hidden victims often employed in positions of domestic servitude. Hauser concludes with an appeal to governments and the public to meet the humanitarian crisis of modern slavery with awareness and action. Both the Government and the National Crime

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<sup>4</sup> Many police operation names use words that are made up such as in this operation name

Agency have run campaigns along with a number of charities to draw attention to modern slavery under the banner of 'Hidden in plain sight'.



Figure 3: Modern slavery poster. Image courtesy of Unseen (<https://www.unseenuk.org> )

Visibility, on the other hand, may be seen as the increasing publicness of various phenomena which were formerly not generally open to the public attention or scrutiny and the global openness to public view of people and events, due primarily to increasing media, including internet, coverage.

In the social science literature, visibility is usually characterised by positive qualities. It is viewed as essential or at least, desirable for the empowerment or recognition of marginalised communities. As can be already seen in the social psychology literature, several studies are built upon this assumption and frame invisibility as a problem for ethnic, race and gendered groups. Sözer (2014) points to an alternative approach to visibility and following Goffman (1971) recognises visibility as a mechanism for control and suggests that it presents itself as a means for surveillance, particularly for groups who are marginalised. As a useful example of surveillance, Foucault (1977) describes the visibility created by Bentham's panopticon<sup>5</sup> as a trap as each prisoner may be seen by the warders and the prisoners can see the tower but not who is watching them. The panopticon induces a sense of permanent visibility that ensures the functioning of power. A modern example of the panopticon is the ever-present CCTV monitoring of public and private spaces producing the same permanence of visibility and disproportionate operation of power. By private spaces, I am

<sup>5</sup> A multi-winged prison building with a guard tower at the centre from which it is possible to see each cell

referring to privately owned, and not domestic, spaces such as publicly accessible spaces of shopping malls, entertainment complexes and so on. One of the slogans to sell CCTV to the public was 'looking out for you' which contained the ambiguous portrayal of the benign and paternalistic role of CCTV contrasted with a warning putting wrongdoers on notice that they would be seen and apprehended.

According to Sözer (2014) anthropological studies lean towards seeing visibility as a form of empowerment for marginalised groups and says that, 'academics, policy makers and NGO workers presume that making the invisible visible is an absolute act; one of benevolence if visibility is seen as recognition, and of malevolence if visibility is seen as a matter of social control' (2014, p. 1). That visibility has two faces: as source of empowerment and as a source of disenfranchisement depending on the socio-political context (Brighenti, 2007) can be transferred to invisibility as well. In the context of missing people, what matters is not visibility or invisibility in themselves, but the control of one's own visibility and invisibility. Questions around the revelation or concealment of information about one's self are raised: whether and to what extent, when and how, a person is willing to show or hide themselves.

As stated, Bentham's panopticon and my reference to ubiquitous public surveillance through CCTV systems can be seen from the socio-political perspective as well as from the perspective of technology and provide a useful bridge to the next section on how technology produces and reproduces invisibility. Missing might be seen as a socio-political issue: by incorporating aspects of arguments in relation to the lack of representation of missing persons as a social group and the apparent discrimination by the police in taking or investigating reports. Missing is hidden in plain sight and it is systemically ignored in some populations with society responding to missing when it is desirable to do so (for the right citizens), but often through apparatus of power operating through the noticeable but routine use of CCTV.

### 2.3 Invisibility as a technology

Visibility and invisibility can be likened to public and private spheres. From a sociological perspective, the public sphere envelops the world of politics, of public institutions and of paid employment. Public life is organised and

governed by shared norms and values. On the other hand, private life is an intimate realm, it concerns personal identity and rational choice and free will. Chandler and Munday (2011) argue that historians often trace the separation of public and private spheres 'to modernity, industrialisation, urbanisation and the gendered division of labour, though in classical Greece there was also a division between the public world of politics and the private world of family'. This section picks up on the race to modernity and the blurring of public and private spheres in discussing how technology in the shape of architectural and spatial structures of public and private institutions and computer technologies promotes complex interactions to understand in terms of visibility and invisibility.

In a collection of essays, Steiner and Veel (2015) have curated a discussion on surveillance, transparency and the hidden in contemporary culture. Building on the classic account of police surveillance by Marx (1988), the authors describe the state-of-the-art surveillance technologies used by 'Echelon' and revealed by former National Security Agency employee, Edward Snowden, and set out how global signals collections, including voice and video calls, emails, web browser histories and messaging along with government communications were amassed by the American state for use, allegedly in connection with Homeland security and the greater good of society. The impact of the revelations was enormous, and the sense of distrust spread across the world. Often unnoticed surveillance technologies in our everyday lives require processes of negotiation and are indicative of the changes taking place in the shifting relationship between visibility and invisibility: what remains hidden and what comes to the surface. Being aware or of accepting surveillance does not necessarily mean that we have nothing to hide, it may mean there is nothing to see. The surveillance society is everywhere from CCTV to motion detectors for taps, toilet flushes and lights. One aspect of so-called 'calm technologies' is the impact on sleep: sleep becomes incompatible with a 24-hour culture where everything is visible and nothing cannot be seen. Surveillance and associated processes of social monitoring and control represent simple and universal social phenomena. The changing shape and capabilities of surveillance are involved profoundly in the emergence of new social structures and relationships, from the administration of criminal justice and delivery of medical care to mass marketing and political participation (Marx, 2016).



In discussing transparency and covering architecture and the use of glass as a building material, Steiner and Veel suggest that hard infrastructures contest with fleeting cultural practices as architecture and art merge. They point to the apparent superficiality of significance and spectacle disguising highly developed technical architecture introducing new and advanced 'spatial orderings and visual regimes of everyday life' (2015, p. xix). Glass is used extensively in this new architecture as both a mirror and a window, both transparent and reflective, concurrently a 'metaphor and metonymy' (2015, p. xxi), having characteristics of visibility and invisibility at the same time. The glass conveys a private world inside and yet a public reflection outside as a separation of the private and the public. The inside-outside dichotomy or opposition is revealed as a fragile boundary separating buildings, from private homes to prisons, from the world outside and can also be seen as a fragile boundary between visibility and invisibility. It is necessary, too, to decode and re-contextualise visible and invisible aspects to fully understand a history and life of a city or place. Walking around cities provides an immersive experience and a sense of the invisible architects, builders, craftsmen and women no longer to be seen although their legacy remains visible, although sometimes hidden or obscured, next to more modern edifices.

Following Merleau-Ponty's analysis of perception in *The Visible and the Invisible*, the authors describe how we see and what is seen. From this it can be seen that the faculty of vision is enhanced by technological devices such as virtual and augmented realities giving unreal and false impressions of visual truths at the same time as providing clarity and perspective. Enhanced visibility is achievable which contemporaneously may lead to enhanced invisibility depending on the software and configurations employed.

In the same vein of enhanced visibility, in 2005 the UK Home Office and the US Transportation Security Administration (TSA) began trials of new X-ray devices for screening people in airport security halls. These devices are now commonplace and can be seen at many travel termini across Europe and the wider world (Marx, 2016). Amoore and Hall (2009) point to the purpose of contemporary security practices as seeking certainty of identity at a border through biometrics, data mining and profiling. These practices have their

heritage in 'aesthetics and medical science to mine the body for certainties and reveal something of the unknown future' (2009, p. 444).



Figure 4: Rapiscan backscatter imaging courtesy of MassDevices.com at <https://www.massdevices.com/feds-glossed-cancer-risks-airport-x-ray-scanner>

In the authors' article on dissecting the body at the border, they describe 'backscatter' as one illustration of the advance in the visualisation process to probe beyond what is immediately available to an observer's senses. Promising to visualise the invisible, these devices can image the unseen, surface clothing can be penetrated making visible that which is hidden from view, revealing new visualisations of the unknown, potentially risky body, in addition to offering new perspectives on its management.

In managing what many nation states describe as risky people, Sigvardsdotter (2013) writes about the 'irregular, undocumented, illegal, sans-papier, papperslös' (p. 523) all terms to describe people who lack the documents reside officially in places where they have settled. While writing about the Swedish experience, her arguments relate to the United Kingdom and elsewhere in that,

'the physical presence of an undocumented person produces no corresponding legal or socio-political presence; they have no functional official identity and are effectually excluded from public space, institutions and activities. Officially, they are absent' (p. 523)

While their absence is externally imposed, absenting themselves from the view of authority, through concealment and disguise, is an everyday necessity as detection can result in detention and deportation. However, the irregularity of

their presence is not something visible as a mark or scar on the body. For Sigvardsdotter, by pretending to be someone with a right to place, an undocumented person can hide in plain sight: available to be seen but unable to appear to others as herself. In Hannah Arendt's words, this is the same as being deprived of reality itself: visible yet invisible and invisible yet visible.

In summary, surveillance and especially CCTV surveillance, with its ability to change the relationship between visibility and invisibility, can aid the search and location of missing people but at the same time it is known that some missing people deliberately avoid surveilled areas to avoid 'detection' (Stevenson *et al.*, 2013). In the same vein buildings, particularly glass architectural designs, with their property of separating public and private realms perhaps provide a missing person with a level of anonymity by reflecting an enquiring gaze back on itself rather than revealing secrets. The need to decode and recode an environment is especially relevant for people living with dementia as their way-finding skills diminish over time and the likelihood of becoming lost and thus being reported as missing increases dramatically. Border technologies may reveal hidden secrets but not reveal an identity as this is reduced by a scanner to an outline aiding a missing person's invisibility. Missing people not wishing to be found may adopt the practices of migrants by remaining undocumented and surviving perhaps on a cash existence alone to avoid scrutiny when using electronic payment and travel methods. The next section explores practice in greater detail.

## 2.4 Invisibility as practice

Staying in the policing and law enforcement ambit, this section moves on to consider invisibility from the perspectives of the police and professional practitioners' responses to domestic abuse, covert policing and witness protection work. The latter often involving the deliberate obscuring of identity to protect valuable police and court witnesses. The concept of the visibility of the 'abstract police' (Terpstra *et al.*, 2019) is also briefly explored. The review then draws attention to practice in the investigation of missing people before a conclusion that will provide a bridge into Chapter Three and the Methodology.

According to Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (2014a) the overall police response to victims of domestic abuse is inadequate. While there have

been many improvements since the early 2000s, the police response to this hidden crime is still poor with policy intentions not translating into an operational reality. HMIC identified a number of responsible factors including,

‘alarming and unacceptable weaknesses in some core policing activity, in particular the collection of evidence by officers at the scene of domestic abuse incidents; poor management and supervision that fails to reinforce the right behaviours, attitudes and actions of officers; officers lacking the skills and knowledge necessary to engage confidently and competently with victims of domestic abuse; and extremely limited systematic feedback from victims about their experience of the police response’ (HMIC, 2014, pp. 6-7).

When associated with victim reluctance to report to the police and the widely repeated claim that victims of abuse suffer an average of 35 incidents before calling the police it is no surprise that domestic abuse is described as a hidden crime. The claim of 35 incidents has been debunked by Strang *et al.* (2014) but other authors point to the resilience of women, particularly, before reporting intimate partner assaults (Dobash and Dobash, 2005; Walby, 2004). For Hegarty (2011) domestic violence is a common hidden problem for women attending clinical practice and is a major cause of mental ill health globally. In a study by Rose *et al.* (2011) *inter alia*, on barriers to disclosure, their main findings were that service users are reluctant to disclose because of fears about the potential consequences of such a disclosure. Professionals expressed other barriers in relation to gender, with male professionals feeling that women may not disclose to them as well as cultural issues, with violence being more acceptable in particular cultures. Although an Australian study the barriers to disclosure and the hidden nature of reporting are prevalent in the United Kingdom as evidenced by the HMIC inspection reported above.

Rachel Pain (2014) draws attention to the everyday nature of domestic abuse, making an ironic analogy to terrorism: it involves feelings of panic and terror but because of terrorific actions which are often hidden due to the occurrence of the abuse in the domestic (private) sphere behind closed doors. This ‘everyday terrorism’, which has global incidence, gets much less attention than geo-political terrorisms, which are more well-resourced in terms of policing, even though they are less common in occurrence. The hidden nature of the abuse is exacerbated by policing practices that fail to give a voice to and therefore remedy to victims. There is also a broad analogy to be made here with other

policing practices that do not make visible that which is difficult to police, for example, missing migrants, trafficked people, unreported ethnic minority missing people and so on.

Policing practice is not just about 'uncovering' hidden practices and peoples, it also engenders (in)visibility in acts of policing itself. One act that engenders invisibility perhaps more than any other is practice of covert policing. This is a subject well covered by Loftus *et al.* (2016) in their article which shines a light on the occupational culture of those officers engaged in the targeted surveillance of the public. The authors set out covert surveillance as a peculiarly invisible area of policing far from controversy; operating in isolation from the public and visible uniformed policing with which most people are familiar. As noted, covert policing is an exceptionally hidden, concealed practice. Above all, covert officers are no longer visible symbols of state authority and are free from many aspects of their previous work in uniform, such as face-to-face public encounters and taking part in high-visibility, public reassurance patrols as well as the routine of bureaucracy. As Manning (2003) has pointed out, policing practice is characterised by spectacle: a visual display of authority and power. The legal landscape also swings dramatically: covert officers take great steps to ensure they cannot be recognised or identified in public and interact with suspects who are unaware that they are subject of interest to the police. Safeguards that accompany overt policing are absent in the covert world and much intelligence produced by covert officers cannot be used in evidence. This would include video imagery, content of communications obtained by interceptions and so on. In the online covert investigation world, police operatives often pose as children to entrap sex offenders, maintaining a high level of disguise to ensure complete invisibility as a law enforcement official. Even in more mundane investigations, hardware and software devices are used to disguise a police user so as not to alert an online offender that the police are watching. The same techniques are used in missing persons investigations so as not to reveal the identity of a police investigator or the fact that online searches are being conducted.

In terms of accountability, that is making visible elements of policing that would otherwise remain unseen, the proliferation of user generated content on social media and other channels has been described as a 'synopticon' or 'sous-

surveillance': 'the capacity of the masses to parallel the gaze of the powerful, partially countering the to-down surveillance of the 'panopticon' (Bowling *et al*, 2019, p. 231). Police malpractice, which otherwise would have remained hidden, has been exposed for all to see on the internet. At the same time as exposing corrupt officers, this type of public surveillance perhaps gives false impression of the extent of malpractice and is characterised as the 'new visibility' of policing (Brown, 2016).

For the covert or undercover officer such public scrutiny is unable to penetrate their activities and a new independent inquiry (known as the Pitchford Inquiry commissioned by then prime minister Theresa May in 2015) is underway examining policing practices from 1968 to the current day. While the Pitchford Inquiry is unpublished, a report into undercover policing in Scotland has been published (HMICS, 2017).

In witness protection work, police practice is geared completely to constructing invisibility for people at risk of death (threats to kill) usually due to their involvement in the prosecution of an organised criminal gang member. Against a background of growing concern about the murder and attempted murder of witnesses giving evidence in cases of serious and organised crime, police forces in the United Kingdom established specialist units now co-ordinated by the UK Protected Persons Service, part of the National Crime Agency. Designed to permanently relocate witnesses whose lives are in danger and their family members, the UK model follows practice from the United States (Fyfe, 2001). The invisibility constructed includes new names for the witness and all the connected family, new identity documents (passport, driving licence, social security and NHS numbers) and temporary accommodation in safe houses pending permanent re-housing elsewhere. In essence, a completely new identity, new life and new life history are put together, erasing past history in the creation of a new biography. While these are deliberate disappearances, some protected people do go missing and are reported as such. As they have new biographies, they may be seen to fit into Edkins (2011) missing-missing category discussed in Chapter Four, Part Two in the 'dark figure of missing' sub-section (p. 126); protected people do not exist as people, they are ghosts in the same way as undocumented people.

The last practice to briefly examine is the concept of invisibility created by the 'abstract police' (Terpstra *et al.*, 2019). In research by the authors into the police reforms in Scotland, Sweden and the Netherlands, the abstract police are perceived as a remote law enforcement agency operating at a distance from communities and citizens being largely centralised and increasingly reliant on data and systems rather than more traditional relations with a community. Such centralisation marginalises local engagement and local recalling, as a case in point in Hampshire, the vociferous arguments when the Isle of Wight police control room was closed and cover moved to Winchester in the 1990s: how could a controller know the incident or area or understand the caller's experience being reported when what was going on was so remote? But with reliance on intelligence, information and mapping, the capabilities and resources of the new control rooms gained the trust and confidence of the people and communities across the whole of the police force area. The development of 'intelligence-led policing', also in the 1990s, exemplifies the tendencies for centralisation and the establishment of the police as 'knowledge brokers' confirms their new role (Ericson and Heggarty, 1997). While there is a need to have specialist teams for policing major crime, terrorism and so on, often dictated by a need for cost effectiveness, these teams have replaced local officers reducing yet more local community engagement. Centralist and specialist policing lead to the marginalisation of the 'local'; power grows at the centre at the expense of local visibility. Unseen policing enforces not just the law but local powerlessness, which may be felt most acutely by the families of missing people. The sense of distance is imagined as profound when there is no local service upon which to rely for liaison and information emanating from a police enquiry.

In continuing the discussion on how police practice manifests invisibility, the final part of this section looks at policing practice around missing people using examples from Canada.

Following the disappearances and multiple murders of mostly gay men of colour with links to Toronto lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, two-spirit, and plus (LGBTQ2S+) communities, the police are being held to account over seven years it took to bring the serial killer to justice. In the Toronto LGBTQ2S+ communities, deep concerns have emerged around the lack of police

investigative competence. Linked to a perception of systemic bias in police investigations related to racialised LGBTQ2S+ and marginalised or vulnerable communities may perhaps demonstrate how police practice creates invisibility by refusing to deal effectively with such communities (Giwa and Jackman, 2020).

The authors highlight issues of diversity, including migration status and draw attention to the distinctive matters of racialisation people of colour and Indigenous people. Also noted is the way in which Whiteness and colonialism have shaped the formation of Canada leading to the marginalisation and creation of invisibility for certain communities. Giwa and Jackson point to systemic ineffectiveness in police response to missing and murdered persons' investigations driven both by under-policing and over-policing. Under-policing leading to a lack of service provision and a denial of access to privacy as well as invisibility, while over-policing renders people of colour and Indigenous people as hyper-visible. This paradox can be seen across public services as has been described earlier in this review.

In her paper, Huey (2020) draws attention to the absence of policy and practice in relation to missing persons that is based methodologically rigorous, independent research. This is exacerbated by the paucity of research into the missing phenomenon; a common problem across Australia, north America and Europe, including the United Kingdom (Parr and Fyfe, 2012; Vo, 2015) rendering policy and practice as a form of invisibility. Huey says,

'Instead, public policy and practice in this area remains largely driven by "common sense," untested "best practices", institutional beliefs and personal opinion. In short, despite a wealth of public commentary and opinion on the causes and consequences of 'missingness', and on how police could be more 'effective', we actually know nearly nothing on how to effectively address this problem and almost none of the solutions proffered are evidence-based.' (2020, p. 3).

In contributing to invisibility created by a lack of research the true dimensions of this phenomenon remain unknown. Huey argues that variability of what constitutes 'missing' complicates matter further. The concept of missing captures a range of intentional and unintentional behaviours from voluntarily disappearing, being kidnapped or other criminal acts, absconding from psychiatric care, becoming lost due to cognitive impairment. Many people might



use a broad definition of missing (Payne, 1995) where instead most police definitions of 'missing' narrow this concept to incidents that have been reported to authorities (College of Policing, 2017) creating a loss of sight of a diverse community of missing people.

These views are echoed by Shalev Greene (2020) who again highlights the field of missing persons as 'a relatively new and a growing field of research, even though people have gone missing throughout human history' (2020, p. 1). While missing children have received considerably more attention than missing adults, Shalev Greene's paper explores existing academic literature, policies and practices from a variety of countries and presents a range of recommendations. These include, to adopt consistent common-to-all agencies definitions of missing; to linking missing to homicide investigations and to the missing causation factors of domestic abuse, forced marriage, criminal and sexual exploitation, human trafficking, abduction, and regular and irregular migration; and, to having a national competent authority responsible for centralising requests for tracing missing persons, collating information, and investigative support. The paper was written for a Canadian audience and her recommendations are largely implemented already in the United Kingdom. Some of the suggestions for action are picked up in the discussion and narrative presented in the analysis chapters (Chapters Four and Five) that follow.

## 2.5 Conclusion

This literature chapter has brought the discussion on visibility and invisibility from a theoretical and conceptual perspective using philosophy from Plato and Derrida's criticism of Husserl, through relating visibility and invisibility with research on presence and absence via a variety of scholars including Meier *et al.* (2013) and Frer (2013) to arguments from Brekhus (1998) and Scott (2018) who call for a sociology of nothingness: an exploration of the unmarked (for me, the invisible) and the mundane. In the geographies of missing persons, the following quote from Parr and Fyfe (2012), citing Hägerstrand, illuminates the presence-absence dualism well,

'... nearly 30 years ago the geographer Torsten Hägerstrand (1984) urged researchers to reflect on questions of 'presence' and 'absence'. The focus of his argument was epistemo-logical (prompted by a concern at how conventional disciplines 'cut out pieces

from the real world', p. 374), but his subsequent development of these ideas ... explored the interplay between 'presence' and 'absence' through a focus on reconstructing individual, embodied journeys in time and space.' (Parr and Fyfe, 2012, p. 635)

The literature review has then used three categorical issues to highlight visibility and invisibility from socio-political, technological and practice perspectives using research into the discrimination of Indigenous people in North America creating invisibility and, from a feminist viewpoint, the invisibility of Black women, along with the categorisation of migrating people causing invisibility and issues around modern slavery to support the discussion in the first category. In the second category, research included how architecture and public surveillance created by buildings causes invisibility together with a brief look at how the 'nudetron' scanners at airports make the invisible, visible. The discussion returned to migrating people but from the viewpoint of recording and technologies used to track people. The last section used research and examples from professional policing practice in the fields of domestic abuse, covert policing and witness protection together with a short examination of the abstract police (Terpstra *et al.* 2019).

The last paragraphs of the review bring the discussion back into the world of missing people with a brief review of work by Giwa and Jackson (2020) and Huey (2020) based in the Canadian inexperience of investigating missing people from the LGBTQ2S+ communities in Toronto. The final section also comments on the lack of research into missing people that also contributes to the invisibility around missing.

As I write in the middle of the Coronavirus pandemic, issues of invisibility are present in a lessons-learned approach (see, for example, Rowe and Sikes, 2006) to epidemics which may produce what Burke (1935, cited in Peckham, 2020), borrowing from the economist and sociologist Thorstein Veblen, described as 'trained incapacity ... that state of affairs whereby one's very abilities can function as blindnesses'. Burke argued that habitual ways of thinking can diminish capacity to make lateral connections: when the present is viewed through the lens of former disease outbreaks, typically we focus on similarities and overlook important differences. Blind spots and invisibility are created and as Burke suggested, 'a way of seeing is also a way of not seeing'.

The thesis moves on to next chapter, Methodology, and picks up on the three categorical issues or perspectives from this chapter in the six-point framework used for my research project plan. The framework was used to underpin the topic guide for semi-structured interviews and included statistical; experiential (practice); categorical; technical (technology); and language and culture (socio-political) as a way of leading the participants through the interview process and to support the data collection.

## Chapter Three - Methodology

### 3.1 Introduction

Qualitative and quantitative research approaches are underpinned by different histories and philosophies and it is usual to see a researcher prefer one approach over another dependent upon the researcher's view of the world (referred to as *ontology*), the way in which knowledge is obtained (referred to as *epistemology*) and what research questions are being addressed. As the foundations of each approach are different, each one will produce knowledge in a different way and thus, the results or outcomes from each approach will also vary. Creswell argues that the two approaches are not as separate as they seem, quantitative and qualitative methods '... should not be viewed as rigid, distinct categories, polar opposites, or dichotomies. [...] A study *tends* to be more qualitative than quantitative or vice-versa.' (2014, p. 3, emphasis in original). The central issues in an epistemological context are questioned by Bryman (2012), 'whether the social world can and should be studied according to the same principles, procedures, and ethos as the natural sciences' (2012, p. 27). To assist in understanding the natural science model, which is most often associated with positivist epistemology, Bryman proposes five principles as phenomenism: knowledge confirmed by the senses; deductivism: the testing of hypotheses; inductivism: arriving at knowledge through the gathering of facts; science conducted in a way that is value free, it is objective; and, that scientific statements are the true domain of the scientist (2012, p. 28). The contrasting epistemological position is known as interpretivism. As it can be seen, interpretivism has been influenced by a different intellectual tradition. It requires the social scientist to reach for the subjective meaning of social action and contrasts with the physical scientist's objective view of the world.

Having looked briefly at epistemological positions, it is necessary to consider the question of ontology, or worldview. Ontology deals with the nature of reality and for Sarantakos there are two ontologies: realist and constructionist (2013, p. 28); realists hold the belief that both natural and social sciences should use the same type of approach to data collection and to explanation. Whereas constructionism (or constructivism) focuses on the view that reality is constructed. Sarantakos explains that 'trees, rivers, forests and mountains may exist outside of people's consciousness but have no meaning until addressed

by people ... meaning ... emerges out of people's interaction with the world' (2013, p. 37).

The underlying theories behind methodological approaches are helpfully set out by Punch (2014). He encompasses both ontology and epistemology dealing with them as assumptions the researcher will hold 'about the nature of the reality being studied ... about what constitutes knowledge of this reality, and ... about what therefore are appropriate methods of building knowledge of this reality' (p. 14). For Punch (2014) and for Denzin and Lincoln (1998, p. 26), these assumptions constitute the essence of the term paradigm: a broad term enveloping necessary elements of epistemology, theory and philosophy alongside methods to be used; more succinctly as 'a basic set of beliefs that guide action' (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998, p. 185).

Qualitative approaches are marked by an inductive, generation of theory method; interpretivism as an epistemological orientation; and, with an ontological position of constructionism (Bryman, 2012, p. 36). Quantitative research can be seen as being concerned with appearances only and tends to neglect the essence of life. This neglect of life further manifests itself with the de-personalisation of the researcher and the researched who are often turned into units or objects (Sarantakos, 2013, pp. 34-36). By separating an object, in my study, missing people from their context, their personal attributes become variables, depth of feelings and attitudes are converted to numbers and computer data. As Silverman (2013) sets out in a quote from one of his PhD students, Day-Miller, '... along with other participants, provided a unique voice during the collection of data, yet that voice was ultimately muted by the deafening 'thud' of an aggregate statistic' (2013, p. 6).

The literature review chapter above helps to shine a light on invisibility and I have deliberately chosen a qualitative methodology for my research in the belief that quantitative research (particularly in the field of missing persons) on its own has the tendency to disguise people through a concentration on data and statistics (after Edkins, 2011). To some extent it can be argued that the researcher themselves are hidden in the work in the same way that translators cannot be seen as Venuti (1986) explains,

‘... this is what I shall call the invisibility of the translator. This somewhat melodramatic term refers to two related phenomena, one having to do with reader response to translations, the other with the criterion by which they are produced and evaluated. ... What is so remarkable here is that both attitudes completely efface the translator's crucial intervention in the text: the more "successful" the translation, the more invisible the translator, and the more visible the author or meaning of the original text.’ (pp.179-180)

Setting aside positionality, it could be said perhaps that, the more successful the piece of qualitative research, the more can be seen of the respondents, their data and the analysis and the less can be seen of the researcher. For these reasons, I have adopted a qualitative approach, an approach that develops the pursuit of *Verstehen* or human understanding. My study is underpinned by a broadly constructivist ontology linked to an interpretivist epistemology.

To complete my research paradigm, as suggested by Denzin and Lincoln (1998), I needed to select a research method to deliver the knowledge I was seeking to produce. Using grounded theory, I would be able to generate theories that account for patterns of behaviour and social processes that are both relevant and problematic for the actors involved (after Strauss and Corbin, 1990 and Glaser, 1998; see also Glaser, 2014 and Corbin and Strauss, 2015). It would be grounded in deriving theory that is faithful to the everyday reality of ‘missing’. Grounded theory is based on a ‘general method of comparative analysis’ (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p. 1). It works by identifying concepts in the data which are then extensively compared and contrasted with other concepts. Similarities are grouped together with the most abstract grouping forming a category. Concepts and categories should be ‘continuously tested against new data instances until theoretical saturation has been reached and the resultant categories ‘fit’ the data’ (Frost *et al.*, 2010, p. 443). I elected to use thematic network analysis, which has its roots in grounded theory, to decode the evidence provided by the research informants and to recode into a series of conceptual and theoretical themes following the guidance and examples provided by Attride-Stirling (2002) and Vaismoradi *et al.* (2013).

This chapter is set out in parts:

- Part One - establishing the research project
- Part Two - the interviews

- Part Three - the transcription process
- Part Four - the coding process
- Part Five - the analysis
- Part Six - positionality and reflexivity
- Part Seven – conclusions

To aid the reader I have set out a flowchart and timeline below describing the various stages of my research from early considerations for the project through to its conclusion and drafting of the thesis.

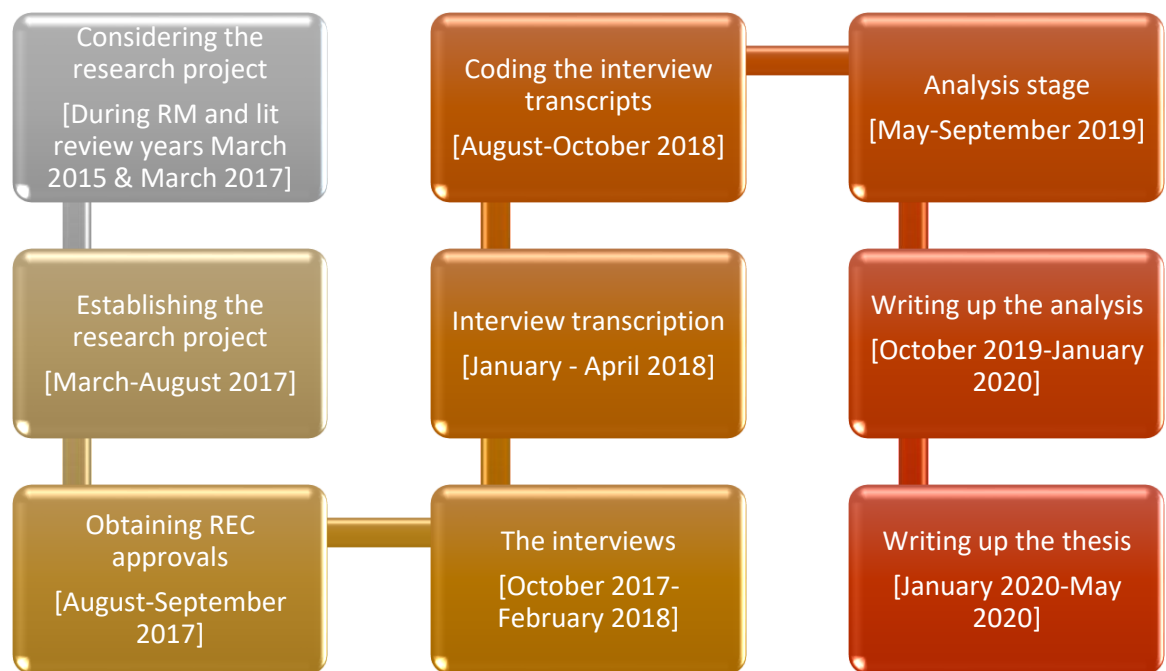


Figure 5: Flowchart and timeline for project

### 3.2 Part One - Establishing the research project

The research project developed out of my literature review on harm and missing persons. The literature review revealed considerable difficulties in assessing the possibility of modelling harm in missing episodes. At the same time, issues around the visibility and invisibility of missing people emerged very strongly in the review. To a large extent, the concept of ‘visibility’ might be easier to assess than ‘invisibility’ as the first may be observed as a real thing: something may be seen, heard or sensed to have occurred whereas the latter might need to be assessed by its operation, its characteristics and its impact or effect. It cannot be seen or heard for itself as it is unobservable. Researching something as difficult as invisibility is immediately challenging; invisibility is itself a liminal

concept and only by thinking around invisibility would it be possible to see what effect it had. It was there to be found in a similar sense to seeing in the dark.

Cones, situated at the back of our retinas, are active in higher light levels, providing photopic vision, capable of distinguishing colour and high spatial acuity. In lower light levels, rods, situated mainly around the retina, must be used providing scotopic vision with little colour or spatial acuity. To see effectively in the dark, one must move our eyes obliquely in a landscape or space and, in doing so, objects which cannot be seen when looking directly at them may be observed as existing. The project was always difficult in this way as invisibility cannot be seen by looking directly for it, it can only be seen as a consequence of exploring in multiple ways, a landscape, a space or a time.

I set a timetable for work over the third year of my studies to have the first part completed within a year. Mistakenly and naïvely, I thought that setting up the first part of the research study in conjunction with my professional work would be straightforward and lacking complexity. It was not as my professional work intensified during this first year and finding sufficient time for my studies proved challenging. Achieving a sensible and workable balance between my professional and academic careers was difficult through this thesis. I considered conducting my initial research using case study techniques which would shape up into a qualitative research methods piece. The focus for both pieces would be (in)visibility and missing persons: how police actions disguised and revealed missing people and how little is known about people by the very people who ought to know most about them.

### 3.2.1 A case study approach

In considering my research design, I needed to have a rationale for a case study approach. Case studies form an example of the inductive logic of qualitative research and are found in many fields, especially evaluation, in which a researcher develops an in-depth analysis of a case or a collection of cases. Information is gathered by the researcher by way of field observations, interviews and narrative reports. The data obtained is analysed to form themes or categories from which broad patterns, generalisations or theories may be



sought. Lastly, the researcher poses generalisations or theories from experiences and the literature (Creswell, 2014; Punch, 2014).

For Yin (2013) and Robson (2011) a case study is an empirical inquiry that also has three elements: an investigation of a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context when, the limits of the phenomenon and its context are not clearly seen, and in which evidence from multiple sources is used. According to a dictionary definition, 'the case study method gives a unitary character to the data being studied by interrelating a variety of facts to a single case. It also provides an opportunity for the intensive analysis of many specific details that are often overlooked by other methods' (Theodorson and Theodorson, 1969).

The characteristics of case studies are set out by Punch (2014). The case is a 'bounded system' and while as Yin points out the boundaries between the case and context may not be clearly evident, the researcher needs 'to identify and describe the boundaries of the case as clearly as possible' (p. 122). It is also important, in determining the unit of analysis, to identify what form the case takes (for example, this is a case of ...). Punch makes the point that there is an explicit attempt 'to preserve the wholeness, unity and integrity of the case' (2014, p. 122), but specific focus and within-case sampling may be required as not everything about the case can be studied. Carefully worded research questions assist in clarifying the focus.

In common with other types of qualitative research, there is the criticism that results of studies are not generalisable. Often generalisation is not the objective of case study research but for Punch (2014), the researcher may want to find something more broadly applicable. He argues that there are two main ways in which a case study can produce potentially generalisable results dependent on the purposes of the study and the way in which data is analysed. The first is by conceptualising rather than describing, the researcher is able to develop one or more new concepts to explain an aspect of the phenomenon being studied. The second is to develop propositions, or hypotheses about elements or factors within a case which can then be assessed for their more general application and transfer in other situations. In the inductive method of research, the propositions become outputs of the research (p. 123).

In areas, such as *missing*, where our knowledge is sparse, shallow, often fragmented and incomplete, case studies have a valuable contribution to make by constructing an in-depth understanding of a case. In new or problematic research area, only the case study can provide a full understanding of the important aspects of the area. As Punch (2014) puts it, 'Discovering important features, developing an understanding of them and conceptualising them for further study, is often best achieved through the case study strategy' (p. 124).

Initially, I had thought that I could investigate (in)visibility as part of a short, 'case study' project in which I could test out concepts and methods to be taken forward into a larger and qualitative research piece investigating, 'how well can a person be known?' My rationale for completing the research years in this way was two-fold. Firstly, while I had assisted in several research projects and been a member of various research dissemination and research management groups, I had not conducted any research directly for twenty years or so. I believed I could gain confidence as a post-graduate researcher by conducting a shorter and simpler piece ahead of a more complex and lengthier piece. Secondly, a phased approach to the two elements of research will enable the testing out of methods and concepts in the first piece before applying similar methods in the second piece.

At the time of designing the project it was to be constructed of three parts: an expansion of my previous literature review which would set out *invisibility* as a concept and then draw it into policing and subsequently policing missing persons. The short literature review would encompass a conceptual approach to invisibility which would then develop into a police understanding of invisibility and then a police understanding of (in)visibility in missing, (and, at the time, especially around the (in)visibility of harm).

### 3.2.2 Research framework

In contrast to my previous views on the challenges to performing this type of research, not only was setting up the initial study complex and time-consuming, locating suitable sources of data was problematic.

As a framework for a case study, I set out to explore (in)visibility in missing using a six-point framework designed in conjunction with my supervisors. It

drew on influences from geography, police studies and psychology disciplines and, as is evident, themes of temporality and spatiality predominate. The framework can be seen in the 'The Research Project Plan' section below.

As already mentioned, overly ambitious timelines were put in place to complete the first research piece within one year and for the second piece to follow over the subsequent two years into 2020. As I thought more about the project, I realised that using a case study method was not going to work for me. As found in the 'Geographies of missing people' project by Stevenson et al. (2013), identifying and contacting returned missing people is complicated and time consuming. Similarly, finding suitable cases for the case study was going to be troublesome in terms of agreeing the release of whole cases (the entirety of a police record) rather than obtaining an abbreviated and anonymised version from a police force. Even the prospect of a police force having time to locate and then anonymise case records was going to be beyond reach.

I was left with restricting my study solely to the police. With this restriction came the realisation that my research method (using a case study approach) would need to be changed.

### 3.2.3 The project proposal

Following a suggestion from my supervisors to put together a research proposal in the form of research questions and a research grid, and then in conjunction with my supervisors, I determined my overarching research objective as the exploration of the concept of '(in)visibility' in policing missing people. I shaped up three broad RQs which were then refined to be presented as supplementing the general research objective. The RQs are reproduced here:

- what is meant by (in)visibility in missing?
- what causes (in)visibility in missing?
- how does (in)visibility operate in missing and what is the impact?

The research grid, part of which is reproduced below for ease (and also shown in Appendix A), set out the RQs along with methods for data requirements, data sources, data collection and later analysis (perhaps using NVivo software). Also set out were timescales and perceived problems in connection with the

research itself or with the ethics of conducting the research. A synopsis of the proposed research was included with the grid.

As a case study was no longer feasible, I needed to think through what other types of qualitative research methods would provide sufficient answers to my proposed RQs? How could I obtain the evidence needed to understand, to describe and to explain the mechanics of '(in)visibility' in *missing*? What method would produce the knowledge needed? As Law (2004) sets out, finding a method to capture something that cannot be seen by looking directly at it is a tricky proposition, made more difficult as *missing* itself can be described as a phenomenon,

'... things that slip and slide, or appear and disappear, change shape or don't have much form at all, unpredictabilities, these are just a few of the phenomena that are hardly caught by social science methods. Parts of the world are caught in our ethnographies, our histories and our statistics. But other parts are not, or if they are then this is because they have been distorted into clarity. ... much of the world is vague, diffuse or unspecific, slippery, emotional, ephemeral, elusive or indistinct, changes like a kaleidoscope, or doesn't really have much of a pattern at all.' [Law, 2004, p. 2]

With my reduced timescales it was not possible to consider any form of ethnographic or cultural study. Survey or questionnaire data, usually quantitative data, would need to be triangulated with other qualitative data to give meaningful results to my RQs. Using a survey or questionnaire was not going to be worthwhile. Focus group work was a possibility, but arranging such groups was problematic due to the participants being based in police forces across the United Kingdom and holding virtual focus groups over video conferencing was not a method I thought through at the time.

The only feasible method was going to be some form of interview with selected participants and note that the term participants is used interchangeably with candidates, interviewees and respondents throughout the thesis. The selection process for the interviewees is described below (sub-section 3.2.7). Of all the interview methods, I opted for semi-structured interviews as the best method that I could deploy. Too rigid a structure to the interview would not allow the participants to provide their views fully and as I intended to work through several areas of interest using unstructured interviews would not keep the participants focused on the areas I needed to explore. Added to my rationale

was the issue of my relatively limited research experience and I felt that I needed direction to the interviews for myself to keep on track as well as for the participants while at the same time offering the participants the latitude to talk through associated subjects linked to the main themes of the interviews. I thought that semi-structured interviews with a limited number of participants, all of whom had dealings with the reporting, recording, investigation and management of missing people, would be my best option for obtaining the evidence or knowledge to understand, to describe and to explain the mechanics of '(in)visibility' in *missing*.

| RQs          | RM: Data  | RM: Data sources  | RM: Collection methods   | Data analysis | Time scales   | Problems (research and ethical)  |
|--------------|---|---|--|---------------|---|--|
| Now as above | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>documents</li> <li>case studies</li> <li>interview responses</li> <li>questionnaire responses?</li> <li>focus groups responses?</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>police forces</li> <li>NGOs</li> <li>government departments</li> <li>cases and publicity/recorded cases/family narratives</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>documentary analysis</li> <li>interviews</li> <li>questionnaires?</li> <li>focus groups?</li> </ul> | NVivo?        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>mini literature review June-August</li> <li>data collection September-October</li> <li>analysis November-December</li> <li>write-up to sub date Mar</li> </ul> | <p>None anticipated – ethical approval to be sought from Uni Ethics Comm as necessary.</p> <p>No research problems anticipated. Need to consider access to case studies from police forces but as a qual. study may only need limited number</p> |

Table 1: The research grids

### 3.2.4 The research project plan

I had elaborated on the research grid to produce a fully developed research plan (shown as Appendix B), again in conjunction with my supervisors. The plan drew on influences from geography, police studies and psychology disciplines and predominating themes of temporality and spatiality are evident throughout the thesis. Within the plan I designed a framework upon which to build an exploration of the mechanics of (in)visibility in missing and which would support the discovery of answers to my three RQs. The framework set out six discrete but inter-connecting interview question areas; the responses were intended to provide the data or evidence to answer my RQs, as below:

Statistical: unreported missing persons (is there a dark figure of missing similar to the dark figure of unreported crimes?), late reporting, recording issues, interpretation of a missing person's report, and trust and confidence in the police. Also, to see how statistical collections and management information in connection with missing may have an impact on (in)visibility

Experiential – important places (drawing parallels with the Geographies of Missing research project), experience of missing persons, duration of missing (and duration for whom), experiences of families (for example, not wanting intrusive scrutiny of family affairs), emotional resonance, navigating journeys and places (with passing attention to Lynch's 1960 seminal work as a sub-framework: paths, edges, districts, nodes, landmarks, pp. 46-90), and places according to Davies *et al.* also as a sub-framework: the body, the home, the urban street, the environment, the corporate suite, the state and virtual world (2014, Chapter 1). Issues around police culture and police sociology are thought also to be present so there is a need to consider how to reveal the action of police culture/sociology. There is perhaps, an obvious point to consider here, too, that all *missing* is invisible: invisible to family, invisible to the police, invisible to society and so on. This issue links to 'how well you know someone'. Following Edkins (2011) and Parr and Fyfe (2012), I needed to consider that people hover between being present and being absent

Categorical: the creation of categories (see Gibbs and Woolnough, 2007 or Eales, 2016 for examples of behavioural actuarial categorisation or for categorisation of risk and response, see College of Policing, 2017) can be seen as pigeon-holing people and sets of assumptions may flow from categorisation; bias may begin to operate immediately from categorisation. These are potentially unhelpful consequences and may create a sense of (in)visibility. On the other hand, categories help to make sense of the world and, for the police, drive the allocation of resources

Technologies 1: (In)visibility may be created by social media posts and through other publicity for missing people; publicity decisions and considerations are likely to have an impact. A discussion around the 'right to be forgotten' should also be encompassed

Technologies 2: the technical aspects of missing investigations, for example, open source searching and use of social media to trace people. Often a missing person can be seen (perhaps virtually, via financial or communication data) but not found in the real world

Language and culture: exploring how police language and jargon in the setting of police culture has an impact on (in)visibility.

In condensing the above framework, I drew up a prospective topic guide based on four main areas: the organisation and policy context of missing persons; missing persons in police records and police data; missing persons investigations, especially around search and publicity (to cover categorical data); and missing persons and publicity.

As an introductory question, the research interviewees were to be asked about the current and previous roles and experience, particularly of missing persons. Without specific questions, two other areas were intended to be assessed: the use of police language (jargon) and the impact of police occupational culture. Additionally, as I worked through this project, the later analysis became more and more complex, and I began to develop a single long project rather than one shorter and one longer piece from my original ideas. By August 2017, the question set was developed into a topic guide (shown at Appendix C) following



design work through academic supervision as an incremental process. Similarly, other required documentation for the School Research Ethics Committee (SREC) were put together in the same way over the next six weeks.

### 3.2.5 Ethics, SREC and permissions

As stated, the interview topic guide was worked up (shown in Appendix C) covering the four main question areas above. The guide and the necessary participant information sheet (shown as Appendix D) together with the relevant research ethics committee documents (shown in Appendix E) were submitted to the SREC by mid-October 2017. As the SREC consent for my research took some weeks to be agreed, I began to recruit the research participants and to test out my interview topic guide in some pilot interviews, thinking that revisions to the guide would need to be made ahead of the main group of interviews.

### 3.2.6 Pilot interviews

During late October and early November, I ran three pilot interviews. Two were with members of staff in the UK Missing Persons Unit (UK MPU) where I work. The staff members had been working in the team for nearly ten years and were well versed in missing persons investigations and police force structures and organization. Both had a good national and local policy and procedure knowledge too. With consent of the two staff members, the interviews were recorded on a mobile phone and the recording later transferred to a tablet. The interviews were face-to-face and ran to time, about an hour, as anticipated. The interviewees appeared to find the questions straightforward and there was no apparent awkwardness created during the interviews. I had not expected there to be as I knew both participants well. The interview flowed well from section to section of questions and there was no sensation that the interview was stopping at the end of one question section and starting again in the next. However, during both the interviews I was aware that not all the questions needed to be asked; there appeared to be some repetition of style of question.

Following the two pilot interviews, I revised the topic guide so that there was a concentration on particular elements of the larger and longer sections of the question set; I would be able to explore these specific areas, which had

questions revolving around the use of categorical data, the investigation and the publicity element particularly, in more detail.

After revision, I tested the topic guide again. This time, a third pilot interview was conducted with a community-based sergeant and trained Police Search Advisor (PoISA) in mid-sized, mixed geography police force. This time I used Skype to conduct a virtual face-to-face interview as the sergeant was fairly distant from to my location. Again, the interview appeared to go well but it had a better flow than the two previous interviews and I was able to spend more time on the longer segments of the topic guide.

### 3.2.7 Recruiting the research interviewees

Research participants were to be selected using a purposive, as the opposite of a random, sampling method. As Bryman, 2012 points out, the aim of purposive sampling is to select participants in the strategic way,

‘so that those sampled are relevant to the research questions that are being posed ... and to ensure that there is a good deal variety in the resulting sample, so that sample members differ from each other in terms of key characteristics relevant to the research question.’ (Bryman 2012, p. 418).

It was noted, too, that this type of non-probability sampling approach does not permit a researcher to generalise to a population. However, as the knowledge produced by qualitative research is not generalisable, a purposive sampling method would be a good fit for my research. Snowball and opportunistic sampling as approaches within purposive sampling were also considered (Bryman, 2012, p. 419).

Following Bryman, participants would be selected strategically through my local work arrangements and contacts. I wanted to recruit two or more interviewees in each of five areas of policing connected to the police response to missing persons. Having between ten and fifteen interviews to conduct and later analyse should provide a good evidence base and be manageable alongside my professional work. From my personal experience of policing missing, I knew the areas that were most likely to yield good results and I estimated that I would be able obtain a broad range of views from differing perspectives through this style of participant selection. Again, based on my personal knowledge of policing *missing*, most missing investigations are dealt with by local uniformed

officers with the involvement of detective supervision in complex cases. Most police forces have dedicated missing persons units which coordinate a more strategic response to missing and similarly, police forces have a single strategic lead for missing. As a consequence, I chose the areas of territorial policing: investigations; supervision; search; missing person unit staff and strategic leads. I considered that officers and staff members in these types of roles would be broadly representative of the police involved in the management of missing episodes.

In advertising for interview candidates I used my own Twitter account (around 500 followers mainly in policing and academia) and through the missing persons community on the Police On-Line Knowledge Area (now defunct, POLKA contained a community of around 8,000 members across policing; note that POLKA is now replaced by the Police ICT Company's Police Knowledge Hub<sup>6</sup>). I thought that publicity on these 'media' channels would secure a broad reach of representative groups. POLKA provided ready access to police officers and staff involved in missing persons. Additional 'advertising' for research participants was done later at the 'Compact' national missing persons' conference<sup>7</sup> (around 250 delegates) in January 2018 as two prospective interviewees gained through Twitter and POLKA had not been able to complete interviews. This plea for more candidates gained three more volunteers, two of whom completed interviews.

Research interview candidates were self-selecting in that I was not able to turn down volunteers as only seven responses were obtained. Five responses came back from POLKA and two from Twitter. This was disappointing as I was expecting a larger number of people to interview; my target was between ten and fifteen interviewees. Since advertising for police interviewees for the thesis, I have seen that recruitment for participation in any police research can be problematic and, on many occasions, few officers and staff members respond to surveys or calls for interviewees. I was able to build on these candidates through connections in police forces and from responses after the Compact conference. It is accepted that the interviewees were self-selecting and that

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<sup>6</sup> Available at <https://knowledgehub.group/>

<sup>7</sup> The 'Compact' national missing persons conference is held annually and sponsored by WPC Software, the manufacturers of the Compact police missing persons' case management system.

there are drawbacks and limitations to this style of respondent selection. Around half the interviewees were known to me personally having met them on numerous occasions. Two of the interviewees could be described as acquaintances in that I have met them in an official capacity once or twice at events; the other interviewees were not known, and the first time of meeting was on the telephone for interview. By late November and with the consent of the SREC now in place, I was set to start the interviews and participant information sheets and interview consent forms (see Appendices D and E iii) were sent by e-mail to all the research participants. Anonymized pen-pictures of the respondents annotated with pseudonyms are shown in Appendix F which is reproduced in the table below for ease. In the analysis and discussion chapter which follows the respondents are introduced briefly ahead of some of the quotes used in order to situate the respondent in terms of role and responsibilities, length of service and work venue.

#### Pilot Interview One – ‘Ellie’

An operations officer working in a national unit providing support to police forces around missing persons. With ten years’ experience of missing persons’ casework, Ellie has made a significant contribution to missing persons’ search techniques and is connected to the missing persons’ research agenda

#### Pilot Interview Two – ‘Laura’

An operations team leader working in a national unit providing support to police forces around missing persons. With ten years’ experience of missing persons’ casework, Laura has made a significant contribution to missing persons’ policy and operational practice.

#### Pilot Interview Three – ‘Jennifer’

A police sergeant with nearly 20 years’ experience, working in a mainly rural police force which is in an alliance with a neighbouring police force. The police force has significant problems in its large urban areas. Jennifer is currently a neighbourhood team manager in a large urban area and a licensed search advisor (PoISA) with significant experience of all types of search. She is also connected with the missing persons’ research agenda.

#### Interview One – ‘Bryan’

A police inspector serving as a district inspector in a predominately rural area in a divided geography police force which is in a tri-force collaboration. Bryan is a former PoISA who has made a significant contribution to the police force response to missing persons as well as

national operational, major incident casework. He has also acted as the police force missing persons' co-ordinator for a two-year period.

#### Interview Two – 'Chas'

A police sergeant responsible for a safer neighbourhoods' team in a semi-rural area in a divided geography police force which is in a tri-force collaboration. Chas is also a licensed PolSA with five years' experience of search in a total of 20 years of policing. Responsible for missing persons search in the three-force area, he has previously worked for five years covering border security duties in a busy port servicing the north of England.

#### Interview Three – 'Dave'

A police constable, based in joint protective services, in a small, non-metropolitan police force with some diverse populations in large urban areas. The police force is in a local collaboration with two adjoining police forces and Dave provides operational support, including as a trained PolSA in the tri-force districts. He has 20 years' experience including 8 years as a PolSA. Formerly a patrol officer and then a firearms officer; of his time spent on PolSA duties, around 80-90% is deployed on searches for missing persons.

#### Interview Four – 'Eric'

Former police officer now in a civilian public protection role within a large, mainly rural, police force with intensive policing problems set largely in the area's major towns. The police force is in a local alliance with a neighbouring police force. Eric has in excess of 30 years' experience and contributes to the national policing agenda around missing persons.

#### Interview Five – 'Frederick'

A police chief inspector with 24 years' experience, currently a new partnership team manager in a large metropolitan police force. Frederick was previously a response inspector managing a large response team (the team responsible for answering all urgent calls for service in policing) as well as supporting the police force policy lead (as 'silver', setting tactics and ensuring operational activities conducted correctly) for missing persons. Frederick is connected with the missing persons' research agenda.

#### Interview Six – 'Heidi'

A public protection team manager in a large, mixed geographical police force. With significant policing problems in large urban areas, the police force is in an alliance with a neighbouring police force. Heidi has been working in public protection for 10 years with the last two as manager of a team responsible for approximately one third of the police force area. She is also connected with the missing persons' research agenda.

#### Interview Seven – 'Eyda'

A police constable with nine years' service, eight of which have been served on 'response' and now as a 'prevent' officer ('Prevention' is a term used in many police forces to describe

neighbourhood policing and neighbourhood specialist teams). Experienced in problem-solving and intelligence-led policing, much of Eyda's time spent of response was investigating missing persons' cases. She is working in mainly rural police force which is in an alliance with a neighbouring police force. The police force has significant problems in its large urban areas.

#### Interview Eight – 'Jack'

A police inspector managing largely rural area 'prevention' teams and supporting the district commander in partnership with several local authorities. Jack also carries duties as a 'response' inspector (critical incident manager). With 19 years' service, he has experience in patrol work, tactical firearms operations, and has spent nine years in neighbourhood policing leading up to the current role. Jack is working in mainly rural police force which is in an alliance with a neighbouring police force. The police force has significant problems in its large urban areas.

#### Interview Nine – 'Keith'

A police constable with nine years' experience, eight of which have been as a response officer and now latterly as a crime prevention officer (see description of 'prevent' officer above), responsible for intelligence-led operations around human trafficking, gang violence and the execution of drugs warrants. Keith is working in mainly rural police force which is in an alliance with a neighbouring police force. The police force has significant problems in its large urban areas.

Table 2: Anonymised 'named' pen pictures of the interviewees

### 3.3 Part Two – the interviews

In total, 12 candidates for interview volunteered and 9 were interviewed between November 2017 and April 2018. Two candidates were rejected due to duplication of roles (see the five categories of officer/staff member above) and one interview could not be completed in timescales set.

I experienced a variety of difficulties in arranging the interviews, from scheduling (and then postponing and re-scheduling the interviews) via e-mail and telephone and in the conduct of the interviews. All the interviews were conducted while the interviewee was at work and there were many interruptions due to operational needs. Some of the interviews were conducted with the respondent in an open office so background noise was an issue. All the interviews were conducted over the telephone although Skype and other forms of videoconferencing were made available. All the interviewees were asked for

consent to record the sessions and all the interviews were recorded using the mobile phone ACR 'app'<sup>8</sup> (Another Call Recorder, a free-to-download, audio recording 'app' designed specifically to record telephone conversations on mobile telephones). Most of the interviews lasted around one hour although a couple were longer extending to 75 minutes.

I changed the order of the questions in the topic guide for some of the later interviews so that I was able to obtain more data material in a particular section of framework. For example, some police officers did not use 'categorical data', so I was able to concentrate on the other three elements of framework. Across the interviews, not all the respondents were asked all of the questions in the topic guide. Most of the respondents provided full answers to the questions and answers varied according to the role being performed by the officers. The more senior officers had more force-wide views or strategic views which were helpfully complementary to the more local views of the constables and sergeants interviewed.

Again, with my time constraints I thought I would be able to start the transcription of the interviews at the same time as completing the interviews themselves. While this was a good idea in thought, in practice juggling my work commitments and the interviews was more than sufficiently time-consuming.

### 3.4 Part Three – The transcription process

Save for experience many years ago listening to and transcribing suspect interviews (in the days when investigating officers were required to complete the transcription rather than, as now, having a modern, and usually outsourced, transcription service available), I had no prior experience of producing accurate transcriptions of research interviews. With only nine interviews to transcribe (note that the three pilot interviews were listened to but not transcribed), I had thought it would be a relatively easy process to undertake. I sought advice from other post-graduate researchers at the University and within the Scottish Institute of Policing Research (SIPR) police research group to find that producing transcriptions is very time-consuming. The advice given was that the transcriptions would take, on average, an hour for every ten minutes of audio recording. Each of the interviews was around an hour long, so this meant that

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<sup>8</sup> See <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.nll.acr&hl=en> for details.

the equivalent of a day's transcription was needed for each of the nine interviews.

Again, I sought advice on the styles of transcription from my supervisors to be informed that there were a number of possible 'levels of transcription': from a notes-style transcription which picks up on the essence of what was said through to a full, verbatim transcription which includes pauses, hesitations, repetition and in the case of face-to-face interviews notations on body language and facial expressions. As my interviews had all been conducted over the telephone, I decided on as near a full transcription as possible to include gaps, pauses, hesitations, laughter, and so on.

Experiencing many difficulties in listening to the interview recordings and then writing down what was said, I resorted to the use of specific off-the-shelf, voice recognition software called Nuance Dragon VR (voice recognition). Voice recognition systems need to be 'trained' to recognise a voice but with interviews there are always two people and with many interviews it is not possible to train the system to recognise every voice (Bryman, 2012, p. 483).

I had uploaded the digital recordings onto my tablet and then using the controls available I was able to listen to a segment of the recording and then 'parrot' the words into Dragon to produce voice-to-text transcription in a Microsoft Word document. Even with my own voice the transcription produced was not that accurate and it was necessary to listen to each segment usually twice but for many segments several times to ensure I captured what was being said.

The transcription process is reasonably well covered in scholarly writing (see for example, MacLean *et al.*, 2004; Bailey, 2008; Hammersley, 2010; and, Johnson, 2011) which describe the phenomena around mis-hearing, mis-construing, mis-transcribing voice recordings (especially in a court transcript setting). I had already completed a couple of the transcripts ahead of reading the articles, but then, with newly acquired knowledge, I listened again to the recordings that I had transcribed and adjusting the transcripts accordingly.

Johnson (2011) produces a critical assessment of 'traditional' transcription methods and the use of VR software and concludes that, 'unfortunately, voice recognition software does not offer time or accuracy benefits over the listen-and-type method. The currently available software is best employed as a means



to ease the physical and mental stress of transcription' (2011, p. 91). Using the Dragon VR software certainly made the process of producing the interview transcriptions easier and less stressful.

Understanding the potential impact of emotional content, bias, confidentiality, and class, cultural, and language differences on transcription is necessary according to McLean *et al.* (2004, p. 114) in their similarly practical guide to transcription in discussing outsourced commercial transcription services rather than transcriptions completed by the researcher themselves. The level of transcription details (as above from 'note' form to 'verbatim'), the interpretative process involved in transcription, the equipment required and decisions about who should transcribe, together with contextual data to aid interpretation is set out by Bailey (2008). She argues that,

'The representation of audible ... data into written form is an interpretive process which involves making judgments and is therefore the first step in analysing data. Decisions about transcribing are guided by the methodological assumptions underpinning a particular research project, and there are therefore many different ways to transcribe the same data. Researchers need to decide which level of transcription detail is required for a particular project and how data are to be represented in written form. Transcribing is an interpretive act rather than simply a technical procedure, and the close observation that transcribing entails can lead to noticing unanticipated phenomena.' (Bailey, 2008, p. 130).

She suggests that it is not possible to represent the full human interaction in audible data, but that listening to the original recorded data can bring data alive through appreciated not only what has been said but the way in which it has been said. In a similar way, Hammersley (2010) also discusses decisions in transcription, strict transcription (a style of verbatim transcription), and description which adds context to an interview. He draws attention to the transcripts as constructions rather than as reproductions of an interview based on the influence the transcriber has in the process. Hammersley points to the fact that transcripts must be interpreted,

'as representing some set of actions and/or events, some sort of scene involving people with intentions and motives, who are participating in practices and institutions of various kinds, and so on. It is such descriptions that are the data of social science, from which inferences to conclusions and findings are made.' (2010, pp. 563-564).

I have been influenced by both Bailey and Hammersley's assertions about the transcription being an interpretation of what and how something was said and also being the first stage of an analysis. I have brought my own position and reflections into the process of not reproducing a voice recording but producing a construction based on it.

In the latter part of the transcription process, the respondents were assigned pseudonyms to carry forward into the coding process. The interviews scripts have not been anonymised but are available as necessary and would form Appendix H. Anonymised, but named, pen pictures of the respondents have been produced to describe the interviewee, their position, their work venue and experience, particularly in respect of their experience of missing persons and associated investigations. These pen pictures are shown at Appendix F.

Two approaches to coding were considered: thematic network analysis (see, for example, Attride-Stirling, 2002) and inductive analysis (see, for example, Patton, 1990 and 1999). Upon reading through various academic works as guides to analytical and coding methods, I settled on using thematic network analysis.

### 3.5 Part Four – the coding process

According to Attride-Stirling (2001), thematic networks, as one of many analytical methods, draw on core features that can be seen in many approaches in qualitative analysis. She argues that it is difficult 'to isolate the specific conceptual foundations of the method, as parallels of the guiding principles, broad structures and specific steps can be easily found in many other analytic techniques; for example, grounded theory' (Attride-Stirling, 2001, p. 386). She points to the development of the analytical technique based on some of principles of argumentation theory (see Toulmin, 1958/2012).

Argumentation theory allows for the definition of elements of arguments as a way of exploring the relationships between the explicit statements and the implicit meanings in people's conversations. In essence, Toulmin's framework describes the progression from accepted data (the evidence, empirical or otherwise) through a warrant (principles and premises) and a backing (context and assumptions used to support a warrant) to a claim (the 'so what': an arguable statement) as essential components in argumentation; with these

pillars in place, arguments can be unravelled and presented unequivocally in solving problems (Toulmin, 1958/2012 and see Hart, 1998, Chapter 4 for worked examples).

Using the background logic of Toulmin, Attride-Stirling proposes that the goal of thematic networks is to 'explore the understanding of an issue or the signification of an idea, rather than to reconcile conflicting definitions of a problem ... Toulmin's terms (claim, warrant, backing) provide an excellent organizing principle, but their reinterpretation for thematic networks has demanded that they be suitably adapted and renamed to fit with the objectives at hand' (2001, pp. 386-387). As seen in the introduction to this chapter, Toulmin's pillars have clear comparisons with the principals of grounded theory: concepts, categories and propositions (Corbin and Strauss, 1990).

In locating the philosophical background in realist/essentialist and constructionist, factist perspectives, Vaismoradi *et al.* describe the analytical process as producing description and interpretation, both inductive and deductive, as emphasising context, providing an integration of manifest and latent contents, drawing thematic maps, in a non-linear analysis process in the absence of peer review of the process (2013, p. 399). For Braun and Clarke (2006 and 2013), thematic analysis is a method for 'identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) with data. It minimally organises and describes your data set in (rich) detail' (2006, p. 79). In relation to the analytical process itself, Attride-Stirling draws attention to the insufficiency of some research methodology sections in that they lack the reporting of the process and the detail of analysis (2001, p. 386). Accounts of themes emerging or being discovered from repeated reading of interview transcripts deny the active role the researcher has in 'identifying patterns/themes, selecting which are of interest, and reporting them to the readers' (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 80). They draw attention to the language of themes emerging and cite Ely *et al.*, who, writing in the mid-nineties, describe how researchers can craft stories that evoke the complexity of the experiences emanating from their studies,

'can be misinterpreted to mean that themes 'reside' in the data, and if we look hard enough they will 'emerge' like Venus in the half shell. If themes reside anywhere, they reside in our heads from thinking about our data and creating links as we understand them (1997, pp. 205-206).

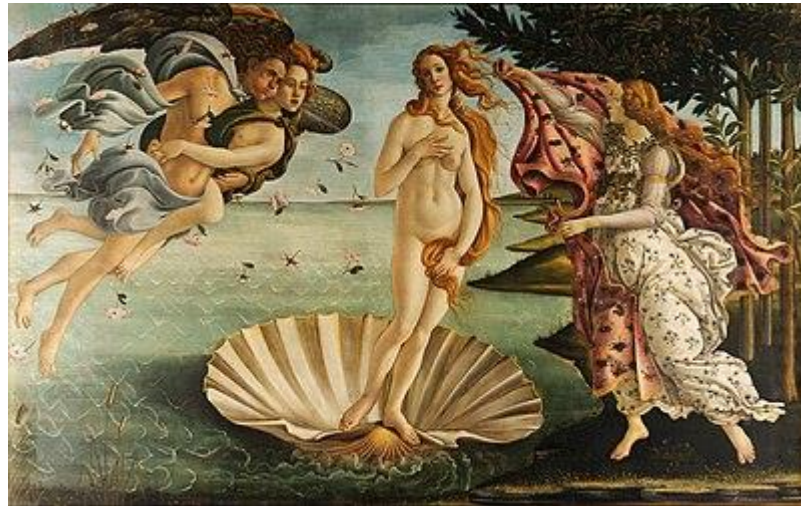


Figure 6: 'The birth of Venus', Botticelli, 1445-1510

For a practical guide to and the application of thematic analysis in the context of learning and teaching research see Maguire and Delahunt, 2017. They cite Braun & Clarke (2006) as providing a six-phase guide as a common-sense framework (see Table 1 below,). Maguire and Delahunt indicate that although the researcher, as analyst, moves from one step to the next, the phases are necessarily linear. It may be necessary to move forward and back, probably on many occasions, especially if managing a quantity of complex data (2017, p. 3354).

|                                       |                       |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Step 1: Become familiar with the data | Step 4: Review themes |
| Step 2: Generate initial codes        | Step 5: Define themes |
| Step 3: Search for themes             | Step 6: Write up      |

Table 3: Braun & Clarke's six-phase framework for doing a thematic analysis reproduced from Maguire and Delahunt, 2017

Following the guidance from both Attride-Stirling (2001) and Maguire and Delahunt (2017) steps 3 to 5 involve identifying themes from the initial codes. These themes are then grouped under organising themes and further under over-arching or super-ordinate themes. I have used the six-phase process in my analysis and in answering Attride-Stirling's plea for transparency in analysis, I have reported on the process and the detail of my analysis as the coding process was undertaken.

Practically, in terms of identifying and generating the initial codes, I considered using NVivo as this software had been recommended by colleagues undertaking similar qualitative studies, however, access to NVivo was through University of Dundee IT systems and as a remote student I could not guarantee the necessary computer links. Additionally, due to the small size of my project an alternative method was selected, using 'Post-It' sticky notes and highlighter as an uncomplicated analysis method.

### 3.5.1 Initial coding

During mid- to late August 2018, I read through and re-read the transcripts until I was familiar with the texts as 'data'. I also read through the contemporaneous notes made during each interview. Using my knowledge of the data in the nine formal interview scripts and notes, I identified 116 initial codes or themes. The three pilot interviews were not coded. I used a MS Excel spreadsheet to record and number these initial codes and made revisions to the coding as I identified similar or duplicated codes and also to condense the codes to a usable number. Useful notes were recorded on the spreadsheet as well. There are seven iterations of the coding and these are shown in Appendix J (i to vii respectively). Concurrently to the reading of the scripts I was able to locate a number of initial quotes that I thought would be useful later on in writing up the analysis. The quotes are also shown as annotations on the spreadsheet. Evident here is that, where possible, I had started to think through representative terminology I could use to describe the 'organising themes' under which to group the codings, and to describe the superordinate themes to encompass groups of organising themes.

### 3.5.2 Revised coding 1 (Appendix J ii)

From the 116 basic codes, I checked through the coding spreadsheet again and took out any code that was mentioned only in one script (for example, code 1 and code 5: 'old performance culture' and 'missing not specifically captured'). This was not entirely true as some codes were so linked to other codes that I combined the codes into a single code as, for example, 'IT systems/case management systems'; this is true in the IT type coding in codes 7-10 inclusive. Another example is codes 49-52 inclusive which can be combined into an

organising theme despite only one mention of code 49 (people expected to wait to report before reporting).

In some cases, I've used the code as a quote instead. For example, code 87 'decisions only as good as information available' (from script 1) and code 74 'the 'person' is dragged out over days of interview' (from script 2). Some single mention codes, for example, code 22 ('grip exercised in investigations') was linked to other codes and could be subsumed into an organising theme around the management of risk/priorities for the police (although un-named at the time, I was conscious of the need to give names to the organising themes). Other examples are codes 102 and 103 that are similar to other codes (eg. 20 and 21) and these can be wrapped up into an organising theme (again, at the time, un-named). This exercise has reduced coding basic themes from 116 to 102. At the same time, I gave some thought to the labels I needed for super-ordinate themes and inserted some suggested names.

Even from this early stage in the analysis and coding process could I see to what Braun and Clarke were referring: the active role the researcher has in 'identifying patterns/themes, selecting which are of interest, and reporting them to the readers' (2006, p. 80). It also brought to life the assertion of Ely *et al.*, 'If themes reside anywhere, they reside in our heads from thinking about our data and creating links as we understand them' (1997, pp. 205-206).

The next part of revising the initial coding was to introduce groups. The basic codes were grouped (using letter codes, for example, A, B, C, and so on), some into (again at the time, un-named) organising themes and some into groups of similar themes (as in the above examples). Having 102 codes was still unworkable and more refinement of the coding was necessary.

### 3.5.3 Revised coding 2 (Appendix J iii)

In the second coding exercise, the coding themes which had been given a group letter were moved around the spreadsheet so that all codes with the same group letter were adjacent to each other (that is, corralled) on the spreadsheet.

This offered the possibility of reducing the number of codes again as many of the codes are very similar (and an example would be the IT system/case

management system names). Some of the codes were almost identical and have been consolidated into one code only to remove duplication.

The exercise brought the number of codes to 63 and I recognised the possibility to reduce further the number of codes. Additionally, the same exercise made it possible to offer new names to the basic codes and refresh my thinking around the organising themes. 17 organising themes along with five super-ordinate themes had emerged but I could reduce organising themes as I selected fewer basic codes. In the latter stages of this revision the indicative organising themes and super-ordinate themes were removed to enable a fresh look at the basic themes and organising themes.

#### 3.5.4 Revised coding 3 (Appendix J iv)

In the third revision of the coding exercise, I started to add named organising themes again to the coding spreadsheet. I selected twenty organising themes to describe the groups of codes and realised at the time that this may be too many to be useful. The names of the organising themes reflect the groups of codes. For example, the codes in Table 2 below were reduced in an organising theme entitled 'family matters'.

|  |
|--|
| background (victimology)   |
| quality of interview   |
| focus on the family  |
| how well to you really know someone                                |
| resilience within families   |
| families need to know where the family members are                 |
| people should be allowed to do what they like                      |
| visual representation of missing person (picture in happier times) |
| going missing seen as a 'crime'                                    |

Table 4: Extract from revised coding 3 spreadsheet

The code 'language' was been removed and the scripts were assessed for police language that may have a tendency to hide people, for example, the term

'misper' is police jargon and has the possibility to reduce a person to a form (or a form-filling exercise). Similar 'commit suicide' has legal connotations when in fact suicide is a lawful activity however unpalatable a family may find the action; a better term is 'to take one's own life'.

Five super-ordinate themes were selected and the theme 'E. publicity' was a stand-alone theme as it could not be split to appear in both 'police work' and 'family matters'. As my work on the analysis continued, I realised I needed to give more thought to combining the super-ordinate themes 'A. The police organisation' and 'B. Police work' as both related to policing.

### 3.5.5 Coding revision 4 (Appendices J v and J vi)

Having reviewed coding structure again I noticed my lack of suitably academic language in the names of the organising themes and the super-ordinate themes. At the time, I was reminded about the essence of a theme in a 'tweet' from Katherine Boydell (2018) in which she remarked that,

'A central organising concept is "the essence of a theme in thematic analysis – an idea or concept that captures a coherent and meaningful pattern in the data and provides a succinct answer to the research question"'

This comment led to me re-assessing the naming of these two sets of themes and thinking through potential links to my RQs and to the topic guide; these revisions appear in the next section.

I also removed codes 5-11 inclusive as they related to similar items as the 'language' coding which was also removed to consider later. At the time I considered writing a chapter as a discourse on the language or jargon used by the police in missing persons. In the same way, the seven codes that related to the 'politics of the police' (see for example, Bowling *et al.*, 2019), were going to be considered in a similar discourse chapter. Additionally, code 12 was moved to section J which seemed a better fit and codes 13 and 14 which related to police leadership and pressures for success should also be considered in the chapter on police culture. Removing these codes from coding structure reduced the overall number of codes 53; much more manageable for the detailed analysis to follow. These elements are now included in the fifth chapter entitled, (In)visibility and missing: police culture, language, and procedural justice which



includes assessments of police culture, police language and the use of procedural justice drawn from the interview transcripts.

Again, I removed all the super-ordinate themes believing I could find better and more academically pertinent ways of expressing the over-arching nature of the themes. I inserted one theme only as 'Structural uncertainty' to reflect,

'the interplay between reform culture, work practices, and bureaucracy in police organization ... How can we engage in deliberate social planning or effective policy making when un-predicted consequences – whether the outcome of beliefs, values, or other triggering mechanisms – relentlessly trump our efforts?' (Zelizer, 2010, p. 106 cited in Björk, 2018, p. 2).

This uncertainty can be seen in the changing focus towards policing vulnerability and away from the previous prevalent crime control model of policing which in part frames the literature review in Chapter 2. This is when the sub-title of the thesis as 'Desperately seeking certainty' (a play on the film title 'Desperately seeking Susan'<sup>9</sup>) emerged. For me, desperately seeking certainty has a dual aspect: it reflects the apparent need in policing for officers to be certain, about policy and procedures, about what is expected of them but also in the evidence for investigative work, in their use of powers and so on; and, it reflects my need for some form of certainty, initially in my coding and analysis and then all across my research work as I struggled with the ambiguity, uncertainty and unpredictability in the general 'messiness' of research.

As an example, I found that codes could be 'cross-grouped'; they could easily fit into a number of organising theme groups so I had to make a choice about final locations or leave them as cross-grouped codes realising that this would make subsequent grouping under super-ordinate codes difficult.

### 3.5.6 Coding revision 5 (Appendix J vii)

Finally, I settled on the ten organising themes and introduced five super-ordinate themes shown in the final version of the coding spreadsheet and reproduced below, in Table 3 and 4, for ease.

---

<sup>9</sup> For more information go to <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0089017/>

|   |
|---|
| 1. valuing the determinants of 'missing'                  |
| 2. grip: proportionality and balance                      |
| 3. the police response - competing for service            |
| 4. police work or social work?                            |
| 5. sharing responsibilities                               |
| 6. roboticism   |
| 7. administration/bureaucracy of 'missing'                |
| 8. family experiences, narratives and emotional responses |
| 9. issues with categorisation                             |
| 10. dichotomies of publicity                              |

Table 5: Final organising themes

|  |
|--|
| A. Structural uncertainty                  |
| B. Structural sanctification               |
| C. Duality of (in)visibility               |
| D. Dilemmas: ethical, procedural and legal |
| E. Experiential – cultural                 |

Table 6: Final super-ordinate themes

As above, I have already indicated the source of code A. 'Structural uncertainty' and Code B. 'Structural sanctification' also comes from Björk (2018), as he relates what Robert Merton called, 'the tremendous symbolic significance of the means in bureaucratic organizations' (1940, p. 564 cited in Björk 2018, p. 5). For Björk, writing about police organisations, this implies that order maintenance, criminal investigation and crime prevention are not the focus of policing activities; instead primary significance is given to the strict adherence to regulations, policies and procedures (Waddington, 2013, p. 10). Even more

important, argues Björk, is ‘avoiding wrongdoing with respect to the latest Nomos’ (2018, p. 5).

In C. ‘Duality of (in)visibility’ I reflected that police work in connection with missing persons both produces visibility and, at the same and differing times, has a tendency to reduce it leading to invisibility. Code D. ‘Dilemmas: ethical, procedural and legal’ was intended to express the difficulties encountered when making decisions in the police management of missing persons

Rachel Pain was the inspiration for the naming of ‘E. Experiential-cultural’, as two spheres following her description of a spatial concept of ‘intimacy-geopolitics’: the hyphen between each sphere signalling the supposed divide and the actual leakage between them. Pain asserts that this concept provides a framework for connecting violence across scale (2015, p. 66) and I used the spheres of missing experiences and cultural issues both preventing the reporting of missing persons and in the context of police culture and its impact on (in)visibility.

This secondary analysis and coding work were completed over several weeks into late September 2018 and it was time to start the tertiary analysis of the interview scripts and produce an analysis and discussion chapter.

### 3.6 Part Five – writing the analysis and discussion chapter

The analysis and discussion chapter (entitled, (In)Visibility and the Investigatory Cycle: understanding how the police locate missing people) starts with the methodology used for the structuring the analysis and I refer the reader to the introduction in Chapter Four.

Early on there was the opportunity to present a partial analysis of the interview scripts together with a concentrated analysis on two or three scripts rather than producing an in-depth study of all the scripts. This would follow the example set out by Pain (2015) in her article on ‘an intimate war’ about domestic abuse in the context of the conflict ‘sponsored’ by the United States. This strategy works well when you have one, two or three really good interview respondents in a group of fairly average respondents and can condense the analysis section. While I had several really good respondents, I had only nine in total so decided to produce an analysis of all the interview scripts.

In terms of style of writing I considered and do use metaphor occasionally in the analysis chapters; metaphors can be seen as a 'never ending flow of water' to liken ideas and academic thought and enable the researcher to make sense of experiences with the respondents. As Ely *et al.* point out, 'Metaphor gives shape to the analysis and writing and our beliefs give impetus to the metaphors that we find, imagine, and create in the first place' (1998, p. 117).

Lastly, as I analysed the scripts again and began to write, I noticed that new themes that I had not identified during the coding process started to emerge in my thinking. As I completed the analysis and writing, the codes or themes identified during this process bore only limited similarities to the codes or themes from the coding process. Some of the themes were the same, as examples, the adherence to procedure and the apparent robotic nature displayed by some of the respondents, but others, such as temporality and spatiality were entirely new. I can only reconcile the differences by explaining that there as a significant time lapse between the coding process in September 2018 and completing the draft writing in early 2020. Overall, the writing took over a year and was conducted in small time periods, often only a day or two at a time. However, the benefit of taking so long to conduct the analysis and write up the chapter is that I have acquired greater theoretical knowledge; has enabled a greater penetration of the evidence in the scripts; and have become more experienced in identifying and naming themes.

In reproducing quotes in Chapter 4, (In)Visibility and the Investigatory Cycle: understanding how the police locate missing people, I have emboldened key elements of the quotes using my emphasis and not that of any of the respondents. This is to draw attention to what I believe is the key content of the quotes. I have described my positionality and reflexivity in general throughout this methodology chapter, and the next section sets these two elements out in more detail.

### 3.7 Part Six – positionality and reflexivity

My position as the head of the UK MPU for more than eleven years has meant that I am well known in policing, across government and civil society for my work contributing to policy design and operational practice in the world of missing persons; and, as a consequence my neutrality as an interviewer can be

called into doubt. There is much academic work written around the position of the researcher from the perspective of the insider-outsider. There was no doubting that I was an 'insider' which brought with it ease of access, a thorough understanding of the politics of policing not only in the formal sense of hierarchies but 'how it really works' together with an intimate knowledge of the context of the study. I had, in the jargon of the police, 'street cred': a credibility as someone who understands what the job entails, and its stresses and strains. In my head I had a huge amount of information that it would take an 'outsider' a long time to accumulate (Robson, 2011, pp. 403-404).

In this project I wished to 'blur the boundaries' between being an insider and attempting to look like an outsider. As David Weisburd advocated, I would need a split personality to acknowledge my position as an 'expert practitioner' insider with a professional knowledge of the who, when, why, what and how of missing *and* to be an independent and neutral researcher, exercising a careful 'suspension of expertise', adopting an 'I'm here to learn' mentality (Weisburd, 2018). It would be as if performing some sort of academic 'hokey-cokey', in that I would need to move in and out of positions.

An example of the impact of my position on candidates could be seen as several of the interviewees appeared (as interviews were completed over the 'phone) to be giving answers as if expecting me to want them to say what they were saying. I realised that my position as a national expert on missing persons may have been off putting or disconcerting for some of the more junior (in role or position rather than rank or grade) interviewees, several of whom gave responses suggesting that they were saying what I wanted to hear. It was as though they expected me to know the answer already and were looking for me to confirm that they had provided the correct answer. On many occasions, I reminded interviewees that I was looking only for their own views.

Again, with my position in the UK MPU and my relationships with police forces, visits to police forces and meetings with officers and staff, it could be said that my studies were in part, ethnographic. I have used my knowledge and expertise in the analysis and discussion chapter to write a narrative on the subject area in hand, ahead of subsequent analysis and discussion. My work, though, is not an ethnographic study in any way.

In one discussion at the 2019 Annual Research and Scholarship Conference, somehow the conversation moved to names, particularly my researcher name as Joe when my formal name is Graham. I was asked why did I write under this name? And did my use of this name change my position? I needed to think through these questions. While Joe is an assumed name it is not to disguise my identity. Joe is a nickname I have had since I was two years old and with a stepbrother also called Graham, I have never used Graham as my name. Graham appears as my formal name in work contracts, identity documents and in banking but otherwise I always use Joe. Would I be less visible using Joe or Graham? As everyone knows me as Joe, it was highly likely that using Graham would disguise me somewhat, as if I was presenting myself as another person.

I have written in the first person but have considered the third person too. I started in the third person but it seemed better for positionality to use the first person following Foster and Parker, (1995) suggesting one way to acknowledge the creative and active role of the researcher and analyst is to use the first person when writing.

In terms of reflecting on my studies, I have had opportunities from supervision sessions, peer discussions, conferences, post-graduate events and research student fora. Each time I have presented my studies has provided an opportunity to reflect on my position, to be critical, analytical around research and I hope this is evident in my writing. Policing researchers have not always set out positionality in a clear way, for example, Holdaway in his ethnographic study of the police adopted the role of covert participant observer, as an inside insider: a serving police officer conducting research into policing. Holding an exclusive position as spy, he justifies his covert approach, 'Unlike experimental, questionnaire and other controlled methods, covert research is equivocal; those who are being researched control the situation as much as, if not more than, the researcher' (Holdaway, 1983, p. 6). The lack of positionality, politics of position and reflexivity (Cloke *et al.*, 2004 and Hopkins, 2007) in Holdaway's work is in contrast to a more recent qualitative pieces such as *Geographies of Missing Project* (Stevenson *et al.*, 2013). Stevenson *et al.* are not alone in setting out positionality, politics of position and reflexivity in the way described by Cloke *et al.* (2004) and Hopkins (2007). Herbert, 1997 and 2006, Chan, 1997, Innes,

2002 and 2003 also describe their positions and actions taken to avoid bias well.

My concerns to be explicit on positionality and reflexivity complement the views of the above policing scholars. From my research as an 'insider' and the considerations undertaken during the research and the writing of the thesis as set out above, I can advance a new methodological/ positionality debate in the field of policing research, particularly in the area of expert status and the independent and neutral researcher. My expert status has also allowed me to write an unusually comprehensive narrative alongside the analysis and discussion presented in the next chapter.

### 3.8 Part Seven - conclusions

It is worth starting this conclusion with addressing again the challenges of researching something as difficult as 'invisibility', itself a liminal concept, implying the invisible is there to be found. The project was always difficult in this way. *Missing* is described as a phenomenon by academics and by policy designers and operational groups alike and maybe this, in part, accounts for the very limited research that has been conducted in the field. (In)visibility is a slippery concept, it disappears and appears like the missing people themselves, it is shown to be unpredictable and difficult to capture in research.

The introduction to the chapter set out views on research methods and my decision to use a qualitative research method underpinned by a broadly constructivist ontology linked to an interpretivist epistemology. Using grounded theory, I would be able to generate theories that account for relevant and problematic patterns of behaviour and social processes; my approach would be grounded in deriving theory that is faithful to the everyday reality of *missing*.

I have discussed setting up the research project, initially as a short length case study, and then later as semi-structured interviews leading to the collection of data from interview respondents linked to my own knowledge of the subject area. I then used thematic network analysis to code and organise my data which was in the form of interview transcripts. Writing up the analysis took many months, but the duration of the analysis and writing enabled me to gain a greater insight into the data and produce themes outside and new to the themes identified during the secondary analysis as the coding process. I have set out

my position as an 'insider' researcher and hopefully have been sufficiently reflective throughout my research study.

Problems, challenges and solutions have been described throughout this chapter, but the greatest challenge to my studies has come, not from the studies themselves, but from the constraints imposed by my professional career and the all-consuming and demanding nature of my role as head of the UKMPU.

More generally in terms of debates about methods in policing research, as Brunger et al. (2016) demonstrate, policing research has a rich history since the Second World War using mixed methods, ethnographies, observation and interviews. There have also been a number of largely quantitative studies conducted in the 1970s, the most famous being the Kansas City Preventative Patrol Experiment (Kelling *et al.*, 1974) which tried to assess whether different patrol methods had any impact on crime rates and feelings of safety. There has been a decline in ethnographic studies in favour of quantitative approaches in recent years although some, in the College of Policing for example, would view it as a rebalancing as it is felt that so much of policing research has been qualitative since the 1980s. The current emphasis on evidence-based and evidence-informed policing illustrates large scale changes in policing and the growth of not just academic interest but of political and public interest in policing (Brunger *et al.*, 2016, p. 2). My view is that there needs to be a balance of methods for the future as quantitative methods do not support the pursuit of *Verstehen*. In the field of missing persons', understanding people has to be primary aim of research. In respect of positionality and reflexivity in policing research it is worth restating my advancement of a new debate, particularly in the area of expert status and the independent and neutral researcher together with an ability to produce an analysis and discussion complemented by a style of narrative only available from a subject matter expert.



## **Chapter Four - (In)Visibility and the investigatory cycle: understanding how the police locate missing people**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter is set out in five parts starting in Part One in which I set out how the police interviewees understand the organisational and policy context of missing persons. In Parts Two, Three and Four of this chapter I set out how police interviewees understand missing persons in police records and police data and how they understand and conduct missing persons investigations with particular emphasis on search and publicity. The chapter as a whole sets out an analysis of the interviews conducted. In producing this analysis, the framework upon which to structure the work proved problematic and I considered several options starting with analysing the interview scripts using my research questions as a guide to my work. I also considered the collections of interview questions, as set out in the topic guide (see Appendix C), as a framework around which to hang the analysis. These questions were underpinned by four areas in my methodology which anchored my thinking: ‘statistical’; ‘experiential’; ‘categorical’; and, ‘technological’. Using the interview question collections and these four areas proved an easier framework to employ but nevertheless, this method was also discarded after early difficulties in structuring the analysis. Initially, the ‘journey of a missing person’ (Parr and Fyfe, 2012; Stevenson *et al.*, 2013; and Stevenson and Woolnough, 2016), was to structure the analysis. This type of structure would follow a ‘flow of actions’, viewed from the perspective of missing person, but given that my thesis is set around police-led understandings, a different ‘flow of actions’ was needed. This would be a flow with which the police would be intensely familiar: the flow of actions in a police investigation into a missing person case. This flow is set out formally as the elements of the investigation cycle (shown in Figure 7, p. 83) and explained below), drawn from the *College of Policing Missing Persons: Authorised Professional Practice* (College of Policing, 2017). My rationale for using the investigation cycle in preference to other structures for the analysis and discussion is presented in sub-section 4.1.1 below. A conclusion to the chapter is presented in Part Five.

#### 4.1.1 Structuring the analysis: a rationale

As stated in the introductory section above, on starting to write up the analysis I experienced considerable difficulty in formulating a structure for the analysis and discussion. Initially, I considered a structure around my research questions. While my general research objective and three specific research questions are set out in the previous chapter, for ease of reference, they are reproduced here:

The exploration of the concept of '(in)visibility' in policing missing people and

- a) what is meant by (in)visibility in missing?
- b) what causes (in)visibility in missing?
- c) how does (in)visibility operate in missing and what is the impact?

With the data I had collected, and the coding established, I could not see a way of using the RQs as a suitable framework. Instead, I have referenced these RQs throughout the analysis, as a golden thread woven through the analysis. The collections of interview questions were also considered as a framework around which to hang the analysis. The interview questions were clustered into three areas: the organisational and policy context of missing persons; police reporting and recording processes and systems, and, police investigations, principally around search and publicity. These questions were underpinned by four methodological areas: 'statistical'; 'experiential'; 'categorical'; and, 'technological', which secured my thinking. Using the interview question collections and these four areas proved an easier framework to employ but nevertheless, this method was also discarded after early difficulties in structuring the analysis.

The 'journey of a missing person' (Parr and Fyfe, 2012; Stevenson *et al.*, 2013; and Stevenson and Woolnough, 2016), was initially used as a device to structure the analysis. From the perspective of a missing person, this type of structure would follow a 'flow of actions' as a period or journey, viewed as comprising three stages:

- a) the build up to going missing often involving external push and pull factors, perhaps the deterioration of relationships and, almost always the deterioration of mental good health

- b) going missing: the stage which most often involves the police and an investigation and is usually marked by a short duration
- c) the return: the rehabilitation and reintegration into family and friendship groups and work life.

It is important to stress here that the duration of a police investigation may be limited to a few days, often longer in complex cases, but the duration for the police is in sharp contrast the duration or journey expressed both by a missing person themselves and their families which may extend into several years. The following case highlights these stages.

Ju Blencowe struggled with the challenges presented by her mother's dementia and her mother's subsequent death ten years after diagnosis. Her good mental health had been so reduced she was unable to cope with everyday life and decided to go missing in order to take time to recover. Ju's absence was reported to the police by her partner and after several months she was found and reluctantly returned to family life with the support of her partner and family. Her recovery to a relatively 'normal' life has taken her two years (Blencowe, 2019).

#### Case study 2: Missing person - Ju Blencowe

Ju's journey to becoming a missing person, the episode itself and her recovery took place over twelve years which, as stated, is in stark contrast to the duration of the missing episode itself and the involvement of the police in locating Ju which lasted around three months. This brief case study starts to expose matters connected with (in)visibility which can be seen as perhaps ten years of presence and absence, a period of marked absence or visibility of the missing episode itself in which there was police involvement, followed by a less certain period of presence and absence as Ju recovered. The temporalities of the missing journey enabling Ju to hover to and fro visibility and invisibility; to occupy the liminal zone between being 'seen' and 'unseen'.

For the families of missing persons, temporal matters take on completely different regimes according to Katz (2017) and Katz and Shalev Greene (2020). Katz and Shalev Greene examine how concepts of time undergo a transformative process in families experiencing extreme uncertainty, and it will be seen that 'uncertainty' features as a persistent theme throughout my work.

'Uncertainty and time intertwine with missingness from the moment a person goes missing, affecting interpretations of the past, scenarios of the present and imagined

futures. The most certain facts of humanity - life and death – are challenged and a new ontological category of ‘missingness’ is often constructed’. (Katz, 2020, p. 2).

In taking a relational view of time, Katz and Shalev Greene argue that families construct differing dimensions of time for their missing relatives described as ‘parallel time’ (for an ‘alive’ ontology), ‘presumed dead time (for a ‘dead’ ontology) and ‘perpetual time’ (as an ambiguous feature) in the waiting or liminal space for the missing person to return or be found dead (2020, p. 2).

It can be seen then that durations take on completely different features for the missing person, the person’s family and for the police. As this thesis is concerned with police-led understandings, I needed a different ‘flow of actions’, a flow of actions that the police would understand immediately in the course of a police investigation into a missing person episode or case as:

- a) consider a missing person’s report and record it on a police system
- b) make a risk assessment of the case: the missing person and the circumstances of the disappearance
- c) consider and deploy resources commensurate with the initial investigation and searches
- d) consider a range of wider and fuller investigative opportunities and publicity in subsequent casework
- e) deploy family support most often through the voluntary sector
- f) locate and safeguard the person.

This style of structure is formally produced as the ‘investigation cycle’ in the *College of Policing Missing Persons: Authorised Professional Practice* (APP) (College of Policing, 2017 and see Figure 7 below). Following the investigation cycle provides for a framework to use for the analysis of the informant responses, building on the coding structure (explained in Chapter Three). The investigative approach as described in the APP urges that missing person incidents are not dealt with in isolation and require a cyclical rather than a linear process during the lifetime of an investigation enabling police to work effectively with other agencies. These multi-agency processes should deliver a problem-solving approach enabling appropriate decisions and further enquiries to be made as needed.

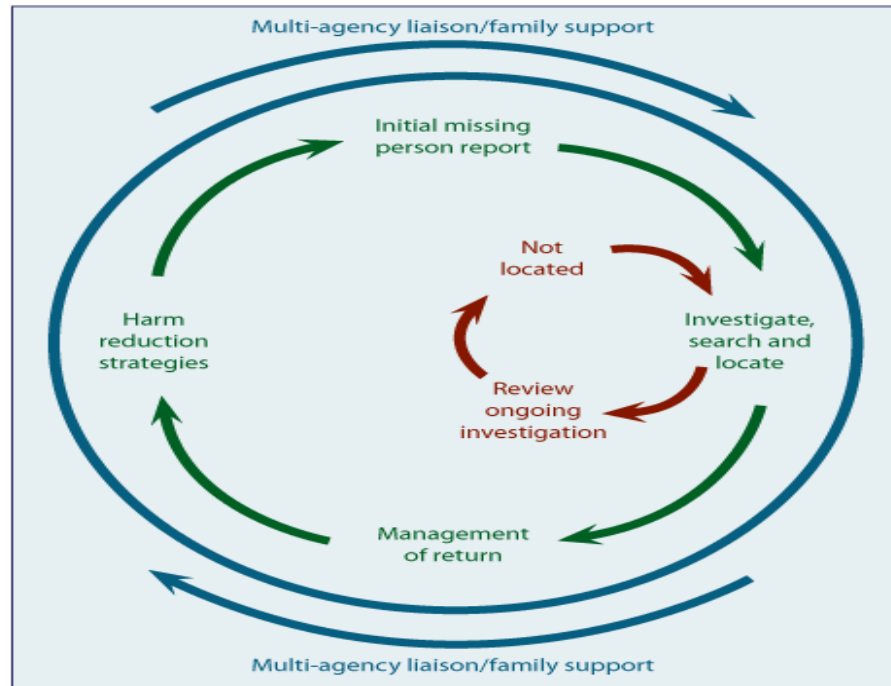


Figure 7: The Investigation Cycle (reproduced from College of Policing, 2017)

As it can be seen from the diagram, the elements of the cycle are not dissimilar to the police 'flow of actions'. The elements are:

- a) the initial missing person report
- b) investigate, search and locate
- c) review
- d) management of the return
- e) harm reduction (safeguarding)
- f) multi-agency liaison and family support.

My analysis deliberately used this investigation cycle as structure through which to illustrate police understandings of missing persons in police records and police data and the conduct missing persons investigations as question areas set out in the topic guide and underpinned by the methodological area of 'statistical'; 'experiential'; 'categorical'; and, 'technological'. My estimation was that structuring the analysis and discussion of evidence in this way would be to best solution in satisfying my research objective and answering my research questions: the exploration of the concept of '(in)visibility' in policing missing people; what is meant by (in)visibility in *missing?*; establishing the causes

(in)visibility in missing; and lastly, demonstrating how (in)visibility operates in missing and setting out its impact.

Before moving into the analysis of common police actions, the first set of questions asked of the respondents were around the organisational and policy context of missing persons. Police culture was prevalent in responses along with views on police force structural arrangements that enabled me to understand the frame (Goffman, 1974) or broader context to the '(in)visibility' produced by police actions. These ranged from the recording of missing person, through an investigation and family liaison, to making safeguarding referrals when the missing person is found. I am not suggesting that I have produced a Goffmanian frame analysis in the next section but tried to work with the milieu in which the police respondents operate. Considering elements of Bourdieu's work ('habitus' and 'capital') is also worthwhile here as it provides a useful way of understanding the police respondent's positions, understanding the mechanics of (in)visibility and understanding the context (or 'field') in which they operate. According to Thompson, 'The habitus is a set of dispositions which incline agents to act and react in certain ways. The dispositions generate practices, perceptions and attitudes ...' (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 12). Thompson asserts that, 'particular practices or perceptions should be seen, not as the product of the habitus as such, but as the product of the relation between the habitus, on the one hand, and the specific social contexts or 'fields' within which individuals act, on the other.' (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 14). People's positions within a field, as a form of structured space, and the interrelations between the positions are determined by the distribution of different kinds of resources or 'capital'. Central to Bourdieu's work, is the notion that there are varying forms of capital: 'economic capital' (i.e. material wealth in the form of money, stocks and shares, property, etc.), 'cultural capital' (i.e. knowledge, skills and other cultural acquisitions, as demonstrated by educational or technical qualifications), and 'symbolic capital' (i.e. accumulated prestige or honour), and so on (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 14). Other police scholars have also used this type of framework, for example, Chan (1997) in her work on changing police culture and Aston *et al.*, (2019) again in research into achieving cultural change through organisational justice. References to Bourdieu (1977 and 1991) are thus made throughout this chapter.

## 4.2 Part One: The organisational and policy context of missing persons

In this first section of the interviews, the participants were asked a series of questions designed to elicit their views on the organisational and policy context of missing persons from their own perspectives based on their knowledge, experience and understanding of their own police forces and any police collaboration their own area is engaged with in the local region.

There are many police force collaborations, for example, between Surrey and Sussex, between Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire and across the Yorkshire police forces. The range and depth of collaborative activities varies considerably across these types of partnerships or alliances. In the context of missing persons, alliances may share critical incident managers, usually inspector rank officer with responsibility to oversee the initial stages of a high-risk missing person's incident; search resources, including trained search officers, but not air support which is now a national service (known as the National Police Air Service, NPAS); and, major crime teams which are often commissioned to conduct investigations into suspicious missing persons' cases. The sharing of resources can lead to economies of scale particularly through the years of austerity since 2010 when policing resources have been reduced. Some of the participants were from collaborating police forces and their answers sometimes referred to local, in-force policies and sometimes to policies applying across the partnership area.

In trying to understand (in)visibility in an organisational/policy context and knowing about changing priorities in policing and the move to policing vulnerabilities, I asked for views on policing priorities and resourcing in relation to missing people. In particular, I wanted to know the profile of missing people in relation to other policing priorities and how was this manifested; how visible *missing* is, as a policing or business area; opinions around the attention paid to missing in relation to public concern; and the allocation of resources for *missing* in the context of overall demand on policing services. Lastly, respondents were asked about performance regimes and the impact of policy and procedures on the treatment of *missing*. The full question set is set out in the topic guide as Appendix C.

The role of the police and police occupational culture were strongly presented in the interviews with some respondents arguing that specific police personnel may be ill-equipped to deal with missing persons revealing one of the strong cultural overtones present: the division between sworn officers (warranted offices with powers) and unsworn police staff (including police community support officers, control room staff members and many of the staff members situated in 'at desk' investigations and performing the functions of missing persons' co-ordinators. The role of the police is dealt with in the following subsection while an analysis through the lens of police occupational culture is presented in Chapter Five.

#### 4.2.1 The role of the police

As already stated, the role of the police came out strongly in these interviews. One of the most influential police scholars of the mid-twentieth century, Egon Bittner, defined the role of the police as identifying 'an unknown solution to an unknown problem' (Bittner, 1967). He later described the job of the police as responding to 'situations' which he defined as 'something-that-ought-not-to-be-happening-and-about-which-someone-had-better-do-something-now' (Bittner, 1990). While this may be regarded as too wide a role description, the role of the police is well portrayed and analysed in Bowling *et al.*, 2019. With more than 80% of calls for service made to the police being about something that is not crime-related (College of Policing, 2015) it is perhaps easier to understand that the police are being expected to be 'the social service of first resort' (as opposed to 'last resort') or as Punch (1979) puts it 'the secret social service'.

If much of policing has been about crime control (see for example, Rock, 2012) rather than as social service framing this analysis and the discussion produced within it, are the changing politics in policing. Firstly, the shift in the Government's agenda which can be seen over the last ten years from the views of the, then, Home Secretary, Theresa May in 2010,

"I couldn't be any clearer about your [the police] mission: it isn't a thirty-point plan; it is to cut crime. No more, and no less." (May, 2010)

to the changing views on 'vulnerability' of the, then, Home Secretary, Amber Rudd in 2016:



“Because, while forces have been very effective at decreasing the rates of so-called traditional volume crime, which is now at an all-time low, more needs to be done to protect the vulnerable – victims of sexual abuse, modern slavery and domestic violence.

“For too long crimes against vulnerable people have simply not been taken seriously enough and their voices have not necessarily been heard. They’ve been treated as second class crimes and not always been given the attention that they deserve” (Rudd, 2016).

The shift in position from policing crime to policing vulnerability, or as suggested by the Police Foundation (2020a) as ‘policing precarious lives’, has created difficulties for police front line officers as Chas, a very experienced sergeant and search officer (PolSA - police search advisor) says when discussing changing priorities for policing, “Yes, you don’t know day-to-day what you are doing”. A position supported by Frederick, an experienced chief inspector, who said,

“I think we are unwilling to clarify what’s realistic and what isn’t. And that **lack of clarification brings with it, expectations in the public that we can’t meet**<sup>10</sup>, and it does, also, **create a lot of stress and difficulties for staff when prioritising their own work.**” [Frederick]

The shift also represents a paradigm change in policing with the new emphasis on vulnerability and perhaps follows, in part, the series of child sexual exploitation cases in Rochdale, Oxford, Rotherham, Telford and elsewhere. Some commentators, for example Punch, take a critical and sceptical view: the move into policing vulnerability is evidence of the ineffectiveness of the police in tackling other crime types as much as a reduction in overall crime. With the Government’s assault on public spending and consequent reductions in police numbers, the police are looking for other areas to occupy to preserve their roles, hence the transfer of effort into policing vulnerability (Punch, 2016).

Secondly, the College of Policing has been responding too, promoting a professional ‘licence to practise’ qualification in the field of vulnerability which presents itself as a near equivalent to the ‘Professionalising Investigations Programme’ for crime investigators in a move designed to professionalise the police and embed evidence-based policing policy and practice (Marshall, 2016).

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<sup>10</sup> Note that quote content in bold type is my emphasis, drawing attention to key elements of the quotes.

Thirdly, the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC) and the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) have published a Policing Vision 2025 in which policing vulnerability is strongly promoted as, 'Reducing crime and protecting the vulnerable are core priorities for the police service' (APCC and NPCC, 2016, p. 3).

Lastly, in Scotland, too, the key issues in policing are changing. The new Police Scotland 'Policing 2026' strategy shifts the debate on the purpose of policing. The new strategy, published in February, 2017, sets out: crime prevention, harm reduction, partners and collaboration, and localities and communities as its aims with the four supporting themes of prevention, protection, communities, and knowledge and innovation (Gormley, 2016; Matheson, 2016; Fyfe, 2016 and Police Scotland, 2017). The strategy derives its purposes from the policing principles set out in Section 32 of the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act of 2012:

- (a) that the main purpose of policing is to improve the safety and well-being of persons, localities and communities in Scotland, and
- (b) that the Police Service, working in collaboration with others where appropriate, should seek to achieve that main purpose by policing in a way which (i) is accessible to, and engaged with, local communities, and (ii) promotes measures to prevent crime, harm and disorder.

More recently, Dyke et al. (2019) argue that changes in the police mission are a consequence of 'fundamental societal changes in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries ... from industrial to networked, from modernity and postmodern or reflexive modernity' (2019, p. 289). For a substantial review of the role of the police, see *Revisiting the Police Mission* (Police Foundation, 2020c).

With the shifting discourse regarding the police mission being about harm reduction as well as crime prevention could feature somewhere in this analysis, these legislative and policy changes are designed to increase the visibility of vulnerability in general and public protection matters specifically in policing. Recognising that 'missing persons' sits as one of the thirteen policing vulnerability policy areas under the College of Policing authorised professional practice (College of Policing, 2020a) should be seen as one of the first steps to increasing the visibility of operations in conjunction with the police response to

missing persons. In describing this shift in mission for the police, Bryan, a long-serving district inspector and former search advisor in a semi-rural constabulary within a tri-force collaboration said,

“... xxxx [name of police force] Police has moved its focus ... The Police and Crime Commissioner’s objectives, the **police and crime plan**, .... **is all around vulnerabilities**, it’s about domestic abuse, CSE and modern-day slavery so **missing is not specifically captured**, either, in the priorities. ... I think there’s been a focus on upper end, the highest risk missing people, does get certainly, does get **attention that it deserves** ...” [Bryan]

The next sub-section presents a narrative or discussion with an analysis of the respondents’ views highlighted with quotes from the interview participants. The order of the discussion follows the order of questions in the interview topic guide (see Appendix C) and as set out, in brief, at the head of this Part.

#### 4.2.2 Policing priorities and resourcing in relation to missing people

The respondents’ views by and large reflected the changing emphases and changing priorities for the police and the changes the politics of policing as you would expect and again, as expected, the changes in behaviours of the police are ameliorated by the predominant occupational culture. A couple of the respondents set out the move from an old performance culture where police work was judged on the incidence of crime types and clear-up rates (detections) to a focus on vulnerability. Key performance indicators took precedence with chief officers being held to account by the Home Secretary, police authorities and latterly, Police and Crime Commissioners. The emphasis on performance cascaded throughout policing with the effectiveness of local command teams and their officers judged through mechanisms such as ‘Compstat’-style meetings. Compstat originated in the New York Police Department in the 1990s as a crime reduction tool. It was widely introduced in the United Kingdom and was a process in which police commands were held to account through comparative crime rates and detection measures. The College of Policing quotes Silverman arguing that Compstat,

‘can reinforce traditional ‘command and control’ police hierarchies, and not foster innovative local crime reduction activity. Further risks of an excessive focus on accountability, in terms of pressure to ‘deliver the numbers’, can be the manipulation of crime statistics and crimes not being recorded’ (Silverman, 2006 in College of Policing, What Works Centre, undated).

It was also perceived as a heavy-handed and uncomfortable process with police commanders often finding themselves in an ignominious position at the bottom of performance league tables and liable to transfer to other posts unless local area performance improved.

This change can be seen with Bryan (described above) and Eric, a long-serving, former police inspector in a mainly rural police force in setting out their views on the move away from performance to policing vulnerability and threats along with an understanding of local Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) priorities, which may be seen as producing visibility around missing persons from a strategic and policy perspective,

“... xxx [name of police force] Police has moved its focus away from the old performance culture we had a few years back and is now **heavily focused vulnerability and threats**, ... amongst the other incidents that we deal with ...” [Bryan]

“Well, I would say in recent years it's got a high, **a very high priority in terms of senior officers** and command teams, daily briefings, and **missing persons is discussed every day** on divisions by senior managers across the force at the mash up [indistinct] meeting. So, I would say a high priority. ... Well **the PCC has**, does take a, **an active interest in missing persons** and is **regularly asking for more information**, performance information about missing persons in the force and how we deal with them.” [Eric]

Heidi, a civilian missing persons co-ordinator with twelve years' experience in a large, mixed geography police force with an operational alliance with another police force of a similar size, and Eyda, a former response officer now a 'prevent' officer (a type of neighbourhood specialist officer) with eleven years' service in two force partnership have similar views. Heidi introduces Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFS) as a driver for change alongside other initiatives, while Eyda points to the creation of a specialised team to deal with missing persons within her force as a policy and resource change leading to the recognition of vulnerability associated with an impact on force priorities, again change which may be seen as producing visibility around missing persons from a strategic and policy perspective,

“... So missing is understood as **a high priority for us** and that's been recognised in some of the HMIC inspections. We do have an **operational force lead** on missing, the head of the protecting vulnerable persons unit, ... and has oversight of the strategic issues and we also have a **missing persons' operational group** which covers

operational matters, so everyone from PCSOs, to PCs, to chief superintendent can discuss, kind of matters that are arising from emerging trends, patterns and **allow the strategic and operational practice to sit side-by-side** because that's very important, ...” [Heidi]

“... we have developed a **missing persons’ team** that is **dedicated solely on investigating** missing people and since that team was made there's been a **significant amount of change** in the way that we deal with missing people and the **impact that it has on the force** and that alone shows that we are, that it's **a high priority** for us **to manage risk and manage missing people.**” [Eyda]

In contrast, two respondents set out views demonstrating that changes in politics and policies do not always lead to changes in attitudes or behaviours with the police *métier* (borrowed from French, meaning an activity that is pursued as a trade or profession; see Chapter Five) predominating. Chas, an operational sergeant and PolSA with 22 years' experience in the same policing area as Bryan acknowledged the change in priority to reducing harm but did not think his force treated missing people as people suffering from harm, seeing missing people more as an inconvenience. Dave, an operations constable and PolSA with 22 years' service, based in joint protective services unit, in a small, non-metropolitan police force in a local collaboration with two adjoining police forces, shared his viewpoint suggesting the lack of Home Office interest, seen through an absence of performance indicator, contributed to the low ranking of missing in force priorities,

“... the main priority that we have is **reducing harm**, the over-arching theme in xxx [name of police force], where missing people are concerned, the general idea is that **missing people are a nuisance** and the idea, that we actually, that we **treat them as people who are suffering harm and are at risk isn't really key** in what we do. Umm, err, it's **seen as a** [indistinct] **nuisance.**” [Chas]

“Certainly, for xxx [name of police force], they are heavy on domestic violence. My personal view is that because **missing people is not a statistic that the Home Office are interested in, it is not a massive priority** yet I know that over the last year xxx [name of police force] Police has seen **a massive increase in missing people and it does tie up our resources** so they are looking for ways to deal with that problem, to deal with repeat missing people that ... it's, we've just got in the normal general policing priorities that are going on, **this** [missing persons] **also seems to be an also-ran.**” [Dave]

Dave also clarified his comments around prioritisation of missing from the perspective of allocation of resources stating that high-risk missing persons (he quotes someone about to take their own life) will always be dealt with as very urgent matters but at the same time his view is that his force wants a minimal disruption to normal policing activities. When asking for resources to perform missing person searches, Dave is often unable to find sufficient officers. Jack, an inspector with 21 years' service and managing largely rural area 'prevention' teams and supporting a district commander in a police force which is in an alliance with a neighbouring police force, responded in a similar way around urgent cases, demonstrating how much visibility is given to the management of high-risk cases at a control room and level,

"It's mixed, it **depends on the vulnerability** of the person, and their profile, and what the risk grading they get. If we think there are **about to commit suicide, they will prioritise it**, but it's, how can I describe it: **they just want it to go away**. They want it **sorted as quickly as possible and stop, and stop it disrupting the normal policing activity** that is going on. **Resources is a major issue** for me because I will **ask for a search team**, we don't have search teams sat ready to go because we all have day jobs. So, we have to call search team officers in from their day jobs and **quite often they will not get released**. ... inspectors say no, **our unit is too busy** today you can't have them, and I might **ask for 10** search offices and **I'll get two**" [Dave]

"Yes, so, umm, missing people are graded according to **threat, harm and risk**. So, by that, when somebody is reported missing there is a risk assessment matrix that is referred to by the call handler. And they will carry out an **initial risk assessment** around that missing person so the outcome of that is **low, medium or high risk**. ... If it's **high risk**, then the inspector will be notified immediately and there would be a **coordinated response to identify and locate that person**. ... if you got a **high-risk missing person**, that would **take our priority** over anything else." [Jack]

With a view somewhere in between the above, Frederick, a chief inspector with 26 years' experience and, at the time of interview, a new partnership team manager in a large metropolitan police force, accepts that the police have a role in missing persons, points to a lack of clarity from senior leadership which has the effect confusing priorities for the force and levers a disconnect between ambition and action. Frederick highlights very strongly (as can be seen elsewhere in this analysis) the personal reputational risk that investigating missing people brings to individual officers and consequent stress caused to officers (see also 'Emotional labour', *post*),

“They have, I’m trying to get the right words to describe it, they have **a sort of confusing priority**, I guess. There is certainly **an acceptance** that there is a **role for the police around missing people**. There is an acutely cultural approach, and in our force, I don’t know about others, **they are potentially a piece of work where you can get into trouble**. So, I guess that people understand there’s risk to individual missing people **but also very importantly risk to your job**, as it were, **so that underpins quite a lot of the work that goes on**. There is, I think, a **senior level emphasis to do more**, to do better around missing people, but **in a context of less resources** to do that and also to do more and to do better in, in other policing issues. Therefore, ... **there’s a disconnect between the expectations of senior executive staff and the ability to, sort of, deliver that**. Mainly because there is a keen acceptance of where we can move forward and improve but there’s a keen acceptance that policing areas have not got the resources to, in fact all the policing areas, and operational staff and middle managers are trying to, trying to do a lot with too little resources to do that. **There is little prioritisation**. ... I think it’s a, err, a, it’s probably, I think it’s **an organisation-wide problem** and I think senior management are alive to them. It’s not particular to missing people, it’s **a problem across policing**.” [Frederick]

From a police resourcing perspective, many police forces (and more now since the interviews took place) have put in place dedicated teams to deal with missing persons. For example, both West Midlands Police and Hertfordshire Police have ‘Locate’ teams of investigators for missing persons cases. Many forces employ local resolution units (LRUs in London) or management resource units responsible for undertaking enquiries in respect of low- and medium-risk cases. These teams are able to build up a rapport with regular missing children, for example, and using a multi-agency approach have secured significant reductions in repeat missing behaviours, as Eyda and Keith, a constable with eleven years’ experience, eight of which have been as a response officer and now latterly as a prevention officer in the same force as Eyda, explain,

“You know, a lot of the time the officers in the team have built up a **rapport**, whether it’s with **young people**, or **vulnerable people who are missing on a regular occasion** and it actually takes the **demand off** of the front-line resources and **focuses on a multi-agency approach** ... It used to be a case of we respond, we obtain the information and place it onto a computer system and then we, you know, go around a number of areas, addresses and we check to try and find these people but there was no real multi-agency approach and there was certainly no, no real moving forward from that. ... **It was very much a cycle**, you know the people that were being, especially young people that were being, you know, just, for example, reported every single day as absent or missing. **They will go through the same procedure**, but no-one was really getting hold of the issues and addressing them to try and reduce the amount of times

this person was going missing. No-one was asking the questions why you going missing? And try and change your approach to obtain information from the young person just to be able to support them and reduce the number of times they were going missing whereas now, **there has been a significant reduction**. ... but since this team has been built and put in place, I've seen a **massive improvement in the reduction of people going missing on a regular basis**." [Eyda]

It is interesting to note that Eyda references the previous cyclical nature of the treatment of repeat missing episodes with control rooms and response officers carrying out the same tasks each time someone is reported missing with little thought given to addressing the behaviour of the missing person,

"Um, I think, I think over the last five years roughly it has sat higher than it had done before ... But we do now have, it's been about the last four or five years, I think, a missing persons' department that actually take away the report from the attending officer, the initial responder, and manage the risk. **A lot of the concentration on the risk is around CSE and stuff like that**. So, I think the priorities is emergencies and emergency calls at the time. I'd say it's **missing people are probably in the, probably in the top five**." [Keith]

Here, Keith points to the effectiveness of dedicated teams to deal with missing persons, releasing officers for other emergency calls.

"But going back, I think we are, but going back to your question I think **we are linking missing**, the **vulnerabilities attached to the missing person** and I think because we have those officers who are kind of just specialised and the deal with missing people and **are able to identify the patterns in that person's behaviour** so **it isn't just a report on someone's desk who knows little or nothing** about that person, the officer in that department might, it might be the 20<sup>th</sup> time they have dealt with that missing person. So, **they understand their needs and the reasons behind the motivation for them**, the reasons why they go missing, be it they go to take drugs, be it that they have an older boyfriend, they are being exploited or harboured, etc., etc." [Keith]

Rote procedures, strict adherence to procedures and robotic officer behaviour come out of the interviews as strong themes which are explored later in this chapter. These type of police responses implicitly add to the invisibility of *missing*.

The type of missing person also appears to have an impact on resourcing for the police as Dave sets out,

"Umm. It's prioritised at the time depending on the person that is missing like **if it's a missing three-year-old child that would become the priority**. If it's missing, we had



a **missing drug user not so long ago that wasn't**, and you could see **the difference in how that was dealt with ... not so much resources and no-one gripped the job up.**" [Dave]

Dave points to the marked difference in how two missing cases are dealt with and it is possible that notions of 'police property' (Lee, 1981) are visible here. 'Police property' may be roughly equivalent to economically and socially marginal elements of society: powerless groups living mainly on the street and in public places. A fuller explanation of police property is given later in this chapter under 'Undeserving victims'.

Lastly in this sub-section, Keith makes reference to his personal priorities as a response officer before the dedicated teams were established. He talks through the allocation of standard risk (a category of risk outside of the College APP and used to replace the low- and medium-risk categories) making the point that for him, missing persons were not at the top of his things to do, echoing the comments about 'nuisance' and 'disruption to normal activities' made by Dave above,

"Yes, ... we're not there yet, I don't think we're there, don't get me wrong, but I think we're making steps in the right direction because like I said when I first started nearly 10 years ago you'd be given a **missing person** and that missing person's report would be a **standard risk** but as you know a standard risk can quickly become a high risk and **it would sit on my desk** and I'm a very motivated officer and it would necessarily, at that time necessarily be pushed on me for that to be a priority that I had to do. **My priority was to answer the emergency calls**, get on top of my own court files, etc. **and then if I had time to, to make enquiries** on that report, I would do." [Keith]

Over time it is possible to see the priorities change for the police as well as for the public. In a recent report, the public ranked *missing* as 13<sup>th</sup> in public priorities ahead of, *inter alia*, dealing with other forms of vulnerability, building community relations and partnerships and diversion schemes designed to keep people out of the criminal justice system (The Police Foundation, 2020b). Having seen how missing is rated as a priority for policing and the resources attached to case investigations, with the accompanying, explicit creation of visibility for most of the respondents, strong themes start to emerge. Perennial issues around the role of the police and its cyclical ability to bring visibility to missing persons at the same rate as rendering missing persons less visible are

apparent. The way in which police culture has an impact on *missing* in the same fashion as it does in other areas of policing by guiding, for example, the sense of police mission and the gendered nature of policing among other things leading, in most circumstances to a loss of visibility for *missing*. Alongside these two points are the strict adherence to procedure, the reputational risks faced by individual police officers and staff members and the work-related stress being created as a result.

The analysis chapter moves on in the following sub-section to consider whether missing persons receive sufficient police attention in respect of the level of public concern about 'missing'. By 'sufficient' police attention, I mean does police attention correspond to the level of public concern: if public concern is high, then is the amount of police attention correspondingly high? Do the police respond proportionately to public concerns over missing persons?

#### 4.2.3 Police attention to missing persons in the context of public concern

The research participants were asked for their views on whether they thought 'missing' received sufficient police attention in respect of public concerns over missing persons. Mixed views were presented with the respondents talking through a perceived lack of public concern, through a perceived lack of public understanding about 'missing' in terms of volumes of cases, the demand on policing and the vulnerabilities associated with being missing, to reporting comments regarding trolling on social media in repeat missing cases.

Frederick's view was that the public appeared not to be concerned and from his position in a partnerships team he would be well informed about police and public/community relations,

"Err, umm, **probably not in relation to public concern**, although I don't, personally I **don't see that the level of public concern is high**. Because it tends to be **quite a limited problem** within a number of communities and or families. ... therefore, I **don't think we get a huge amount of public concern** over it." [Frederick]

Bryan and Eyda felt that the public would be informed by the police about missing rather than having a view that was independent of policing, but nevertheless thought that public expectations of police in missing cases were met successfully with the proportionate and balanced allocation of resources to any particular case,

"It depends ... what we tell the public in missing cases that would sort of make them think we had more or little, **more or less resources aligned to that investigation**, so I think **it's all about proportionality** and, again, I would think that **we've got the balance right** ..." [Bryan]

"... **I don't think the public realise how many missing people are reported**. I know that now with social media we, obviously, put out quite a bit of information on social media when someone is reported missing ... but obviously that is based on information that we're giving the public, **so I don't think the public realise how many cases are being reported**, I think **they just see what is available to them**." [Eyda]

The next two quotes highlight respondents' views that the public appear not to understand the volume of work created for the police by missing persons, the demands on policing and the police effort made to protect missing people. According to the respondents, the public also appears not to grasp the vulnerabilities associated with missing persons,

"... I feel **the vast majority of the public don't recognise the volume of work and the demands that missing persons cause for the police**, and **the effort** that has to go into **keep them safe** ..." [Eric]

"Um, no. **I don't think the public understand the vulnerabilities associated with missing people**. ... Um, obviously if you're talking with the family and there's been no pattern of behaviour and, um, **Mr John**, for example, has **walked off and has left a note**, they could be putting lots of pressure on the to go and find them and **bring as much resources possible to** ... Perhaps if you go to a care home, a children's home, or you go to a family that foster where the adolescent person runs away every single night, then I think that **in a lot of times people become very blasé about the risk** around that person because it's **a regular pattern of behaviour** and every time that they return at 8 o'clock in the morning or they are home by midday because they are hungry and they need a shower, I think **we've become quite complacent with that style of missing person as has the person who is in care of that person**." [Keith]

Interestingly, this is the first time that another theme, the 'everydayness'<sup>11</sup> of missing, is exposed. Referred to by Chas as a blasé attitude by both the police and by carers towards regular, repeat missing children can only lead to the implicit creation of invisibility. The attitudes and behaviours of officers receive more attention later in this chapter as they are explored alongside adherence to procedures and roboticism.

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<sup>11</sup> My use of the term 'everydayness' is derived from Rachel Pain's (2014) article, 'Everyday terrorism: connecting domestic violence and global terrorism'.

The last quote in this sub-section highlights concerns around publicity and a fully developed section devoted to media and publicity as part of the investigation process appears later in this chapter under Part Three. Chas points to the positive effect of publicity drawing attention to children or elderly people going missing, people perhaps perceived by the public as most needing and deserving of policing services. He also draws attention to the effect of repeated publicity for some missing teenagers who appear not to be valued by the public in the same way as younger children and the elderly. Chas notes, too, the process-driven approach to missing persons: the automatic and rote procedures applied to all cases irrespective of risk and vulnerability,

“Umm, err, I think the only, the proper concern **when things get into the press** about when people are missing, especially children or elderly folk, **it becomes an area of concern**. Our **repeat missing people**, our repeat missing children, and **the public concern tends to be why are the police spending time on it**. If you look at social media when we publicise say our, our typical 14 or 15-year-old lad who goes missing every weekend, **invariably the public response is why are the police wasting their time on this?** And they will quite often comment, like, this guy was publicised last weekend and the police found him safe and well and he was reported the weekend before and found safe and well so **why are you wasting time, if it was my burglary** and that sort of thing. ... But we go through the **automatic**, we go through a **rote procedure** whereby, well as you know, as soon as people get reported missing we go through **the same administrative burden** as we do, as you know, as we do for a high risk missing person, quite often.” [Chas]

Overall, the evidence from the respondents points to a lack of knowledge in police officers, but not necessarily in police staff who are in positions to lead the response to *missing* in their roles as missing persons’ co-ordinators and multi-agency safeguarding hub managers. This perceived lack of knowledge should be considered as one of the leading causes of invisibility in missing persons as the phenomenon appears to be insufficiently well understood in comparison with other policing areas.

Next in the topic guide, the participants were asked for their views on the allocation of resources to missing persons’ cases in comparison with the overall demand on policing services. The College of Policing has estimated the demand on policing from missing persons to be around 15% of all demand on policing in terms of officer time spent (College of Policing, 2015). The next sub-section compares and analyses these views.

#### 4.2.4 Allocation of resources in respect of demand on policing services

Understanding that policing missing persons accounts for a significant proportion of officer time in comparison with the overall demands on the police service and following the discussion produced by Shalev-Greene and Pakes' estimation of police costs to investigate missing persons, it can be seen that missing that missing persons investigations are a bigger drain of police resources than either theft or assault (Shalev-Greene and Pakes, 2014). Did the respondents think that the balance of resources applied to missing persons was correct in their force areas considering the total demand for police services?

The discussion turned to local 'at desk' investigation units and the employment of police personnel as well as the daily review of crime and resource allocation and the management of cases by shift-based response officers. 'At desk' investigations have been covered in the Role of the police sub-section, *supra* and it can be seen that some of the respondents viewed the establishment of such teams with suspicion,

"Yes, umm, they are, and they aren't, **I've never really agreed with MRU** (management and response unit) **dealing with missing people** because quite a lot of the staff there are, are police staff or they are PCSOs. They're **not actually officers** who, sort of, have dealt with missing persons investigations before. ... I think that, err, I think they haven't realised that **it's a big drain on our resources for medium and low risk missing people** and they are trying to address it. ... Umm, I think that we are still **very risk averse**, err, we still do **too many enquiries for medium and low risk missing people**, err, just **to cover our backsides** when they are investigating the cases." [Chas]

This quote from Chas seems to highlight enduring grievances expressed by some warranted officers that police personnel are somehow inferior and incapable of producing similar results as them when investigating crime or missing persons. However, Chas does acknowledge the purpose of local units in reducing front line demand,

"Yea, the MRU [management and response unit] was created about a year ago **to try and reduce demand on the frontline** and to try and reduce, you know, **pressure on the frontline**. So, it's just finished its pilot here in, and now it's fully up and running across the [force area]." [Chas]

The National Intelligence Model (NIM) is a well-established and recognised model within policing that managers use for setting strategic

direction, making prioritised and defensible resourcing decisions and allocating resources intelligently. Using the NIM, police forces conduct regular tasking and coordination meetings to ensure the correct resources are applied to priority areas of policing business (Police ICT, undated). Bryan provides an example from his force area, demonstrating the appropriate resourcing of missing cases,

“Within the force it certainly gets, the **high-risk cases in particular**, they normally get discussed at an **area tasking level** each morning and then any high-risk get discussed at a **force level** to make sure we’ve got the **right resources**, media and other partner agencies are **applied at the right time to get the results**.” [Bryan]

Eric points to an example of where this regular review of cases extends to shift-based response officers,

“Yes, I think, by and large, I think we’ve **pretty much got that right** in xxx [name of police force]. **Recognition**, at an early time of **whether the case is high risk or not**, and officers are expected to do the **risk assessment every shift** and recognise what the risks are and if it’s a high-risk case, the **resources are made available** by the force strategically to support that.” [Eric]

As expected, some contrasting views were expressed with Frederick talking through the correct resourcing being applied but there being a lack of prioritisation in the context of wider responsibilities for missing persons. He draws attention to the reactive role of the police, echoes the theme of risk aversion produced by Chas, above, and talks again about the risk to personal reputation by dealing with missing persons incorrectly,

“I think it gets, actually, **it is well resourced**, but I don’t think that we have the **right clarity** around, within what we should prioritise and within that what **we expect the private individuals and our partners to do** ... Because at the moment this is a fairly **myopic view from within the police service**, it feels like that we end up with a **lot of responsibility that maybe, shouldn’t be all ours** ... it feels like, it feels like **we end up dealing with social problems** by way of a **reactive police response** as opposed to a **proactive, prevention and intervention approach**.” (Frederick)

“Just because it’s a big chunk of work, **we accept it in through the front door** quite easily, and I know there are concerns about what we’ve done exactly, **we’ve bitten off a huge chunk** and **we do throw quite a lot of resources at it, quite begrudgingly** a lot of the time, but gets some (indistinct) **mainly because some of the staff are afraid** that if they don’t do what they are meant to in that area they are going to **lose their job** although they are often not quite so good on, so experienced on (indistinct) judging what is a good job and what isn’t a good job and what the police should be doing and

what our partners are doing. ... and of course, the (dedicated) **team is quite a sizeable team** that could be making a **sizeable impact ... on a lot of other priorities** as well. So, we have limited resources and the (dedicated) team get a **big chunk of that** and [missing] also gets a **big chunk of resources from response** as well.” [Frederick]

Heidi discusses a different viewpoint, asserting that demand should be seen also as demand reduction by way of safeguarding people so that their missing history is limited to one episode only. She sees that an investigation should run concurrently with the conduct of safeguarding actions, both under an integrated response to missing persons which includes analysis and problem-solving. Heidi, Bryan and Frederick all point to a successful and holistic approach to the management of missing people,

“... For me, one needs **to define demand**. ... for somebody else demand might be you’ve got 10 missing persons and you need to **allocate officers to find the missing persons** but the demand obviously just doesn’t stop there, the concern is that the, **what about the demand reduction**, in the sense of **how can we safeguard that person from ever going missing again** ... So you have your kind of, I would say, **train tracks**, you’ve got your **investigative side of policing missing persons** and you’ve got your **safeguarding side** and whilst they are not mutually exclusive I think it’s very important to know that they can run alongside each other quite well. Now I think, investigatively, absolutely, we are **very good at responding to missing persons** where we need to and safeguarding is, you know, recently, taken on **problem-solving teams** who are, who work on our most concerning cases, **for demand reduction but also for safeguarding purposes**. ... You know, I’m a firm believer that **analysts and problem solving is an integral part of the management and response to missing**. It’s a vital aspect of part of it, I think you have to gain an understanding of the person, their circumstances and the risks in order to prioritise what needs to be done and that helps inform your problem-solving strategies ...” [Heidi]

“Yes, ... where we have a number of children’s care homes, we were getting a lot of **repeat demand** from these homes and **we did not have** the correct understanding, **the right sorts of agreements** in place with some of these homes, who does what, what role do the police play, and how soon, etc. So as part of my work as a coordinator ... [we are] looking at it now to **reducing demand and putting the correct onus on the correct agency** to do their bit before, **before the police is involved or running in tandem with police enquiries**, ... we’re looking at a **[regional] agreement** for children within care homes as well. ... **it’s about getting the right response**, not only to the investigation but to the, the found, returned aspect of it as well.” [Bryan]

The responses indicate that missing persons are fully visible in policing from the perspective of the daily management and review of cases and resource

allocation at force and at local levels. There is almost a grudging acceptance that resources in dedicated teams are necessary and worthwhile alongside the strong recognition that responsibilities around missing persons do not sit solely with the police.

#### 4.2.5 Summary of Part One

Part One has assessed the evidence from the research participants in respect of the organisational and policy context of missing persons which included a sub-section on the role of the police; policing priorities and resourcing in relation to missing people alongside police attention to missing persons in the context of public concern. From this discussion several emergent themes can be seen perhaps as the characteristics of (in)visibility and how they may operate along with promoting visibility or causing invisibility; these are set out in the table below as bullet points.

- Policing structure and arrangements – policies and procedures – police discretion - all appear to have a direct impact on (in)visibility in *missing*
- The role of the police – police culture – the value of people – have a very strong influence on the visibility of missing people
- Knowledge of the *missing* phenomenon – a lack of knowledge seen as a cause of invisibility
- Adherence to process – robotism – the ‘everydayness’ of *missing* – blasé attitudes – cyclical and repeated nature of police response – perhaps one of the more striking conclusions from the thesis is the impact of process-driven approaches in policework
- Reputational risk – personal risk and organisational risk – assist in the disguise of missing people
- Work-related stress – a consequence of policing structures and arrangements as much as operational activity, stress assists in the creation of (in)visibility
- Spatialities and temporalities – how time and space create opportunities for (in)visibility in *missing*

Table 7: Possible characteristics and potential causes of (in)visibility in missing persons - 1

The evidence from the participants points to structures and arrangements in policing designed to make missing persons as visible as possible from both



policy and operational angles. The resourcing of investigations and safeguarding actions also presents strongly to support visibility so may be viewed as a cause of visibility. In comparison, however, it seems as soon as individuals or groups of police officers or staff become involved in the application of policy or in operations, unintended consequences start to become apparent. This observation may have its source in Doreen McBarnet's work in which she compares 'law in books' and 'law in action', more properly expressed as 'a distinct gap between the substance and the ideology of law' (McBarnet, 1981, p. 155). The paraphrased quote 'no plan survives contact with the enemy'<sup>12</sup> is also apt as organisations can establish themselves with an array of policies and procedures only for implementation to be thwarted by their employees. Such is the discretion in policing, officers are able to exercise control over what they do or do not do. As James Q. Wilson puts it, 'the police department has the special property ... that within it, discretion increases as one moves *down* the hierarchy' (emphasis in original, Wilson, 1968, p. 7).

The role of the police or the police mission is seen both to foster invisibility as there are suggestions that missing is not a matter for the police and as cause of visibility as the subject area should be in the hands of experienced and capable warranted officers only. Police culture is seen to exacerbate the development of invisibility. A full summary written as a narrative is provided in Part Five below together with a view on how the evidence and theme has the potential to answer any of the research questions. Having concluded Part One, the narrative, analysis of responses and the discussion now moves on to Part Two and consider the first element of the investigation cycle: the initial missing persons' report.

#### 4.3 Part Two: The initial missing person's report

As set out in the introduction to this chapter, the analysis of the respondents' views follows the investigation cycle and the first element is the initial missing person's report. In this section of interview questions, respondents were asked about the idea of a 'dark figure' of unreported missing people; the impact of recording processes on revealing or disguising a missing person; and, how

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<sup>12</sup> Attributed to Helmuth von Moltke the Elder, a Prussian field marshal.

personal connections are established and maintained with families and their missing loved ones. The full question set can be found in Appendix C. All the questions can be seen to elicit evidence to describe and explain the mechanics of '(in)visibility' in missing persons and to provide opportunities for the respondents to express their views, linked to case examples and their own policies and procedures.

This section is not structured in the same order as the questions for ease of navigation through the detail of the evidence and the associated discussion which goes beyond just the processes surrounding the initial report. Part Two starts with a discussion on when to call the police and moves through the role that technology and recording systems play in creating (in)visibility to police recording processes. With my interest in how an officer keeps a connection with a missing person or their family, that is how the officer keeps the person visible in their mind as well as in systems, the Part discusses the interviewees' responses to building and maintaining connections as well as the process-driven nature of the recording process. The emotional labour expended by officers is commented upon together with the officers' ability to record the individual essence of the missing person to build the visibility of a missing person.

In many cases the initial step to report a missing person or if reported, for the police to make an official record of the disappearance never happens because there are individuals and groups that are unmissed or are considered as undeserving. These individuals and groups contribute to a 'dark figure' of unreported and unrecorded, and thus invisible, missing people. The final section of Part Two discusses the dark figure, undeserving missing people, ungrievable lives (Butler, 2009) and other components of a dark figure such as criminal exploitation, modern slavery, cultural issues and the production of statistics.

#### 4.3.1 When to call the police?

As will be seen later in this chapter, not only is there a reluctance to report missing persons to the police in some circumstances, but there is a feeling in some sections of the community that the police will not accept a report of a missing person until a certain time period has elapsed; common mythology might suggest this time period is 24 hours. The next sub-section discusses

when to call the police. There appear to be a number of reasons that prevent or delay families from being in contact with the police when a person is missing and these are highlighted here.

Eyda, a community-based 'prevent' constable, felt that some people in the communities that she served did not want to report to police as they had never called the police in their lives and felt that to do so for something like a missing person would be wasting police time.

"...there's **a section of society that have no involvement with the police**. They go about their day with **no need to contact the police** ... They probably wouldn't think to phone the police about someone that's missing, you know, they think it's ... **not relevant to the police**." [Eyda]

The perceived lack of interest introduced here is a mis-placed notion as the police have responsibility to search for missing people as part of their common law duty to save life (see, for example, the attestation oath for officers joining a police force, Durham Police, undated). But for as long as a missing person is not reported to the police then a growing sense of invisibility will envelop that person.

It was suggested by Bryan, a district inspector, that it used to be relatively commonplace for families to think that they had to wait a certain length of time (usually 24 hours) before a person could be reported as missing to the police,

"... do they have to be missing for **24 hours** before they can be reported missing which was **a bit of a myth** really and probably previously where people were expected to wait a particular length of time before reporting loved ones missing so I think there's been **some misconceptions in the past** about how soon people can be reported missing but I think, given **the emphasis the force has put on missing in previous years**, I feel that **people are more prepared**, not just to report missing people but anything that people believe the force can help ...." [Bryan]

The misconception that it is necessary to wait for twenty-four hours before reporting a missing person to the police is still commonplace. As the UK Missing Persons Unit, we are regularly asked if there is a time period before reporting a person as missing. The charity, Missing People tweeted the below poster in March this year about not waiting for any prescribed time lapse. The tweet was shared widely across the United Kingdom and Canada.



Figure 8: Tweet from @missingpeople at 2:47pm on 7<sup>th</sup> March 2020

The reasons for this misconception are not well understood but it may stem from an older-fashioned view of the role of the police by police officers themselves. In the days when it was necessary to attend a police station to report any incident to the police, the station duty officers were adept at ‘cuffing’ (hiding) incidents and crimes to reduce the work, primarily for themselves but also for their colleagues (see also Maguire, 2012, p. 214 and HMIC, 2014b, p. 22). Missing persons was seen as an area of policing to be avoided. Even now, officers are wary of being involved in missing persons work due to the potential personal risks and reputational risks for the police force (this theme has been introduced in Part One and is discussed more in Part Three under ‘The use of categorical information’ and ‘Publicity and the media’).

The misconception may also stem from media reporting and television drama and soap programmes, where it can often be seen that needing to wait for a set period (again, usually twenty-four hours) is quoted by ‘the police’ (in ‘Neighbours’ for example, broadcast now on Channel Five). Television programmes can be very influential (Franklin *et al.* 2019) and there is much evidence from European member states’ federal police forces and wider world policing that missing persons reports will only be taken after a person has been missing for at least twenty-four hours on the ground that a person will usually return without any police intervention in that period. Certainly, looking at the data published by the UK Missing Persons Unit (National Crime Agency, 2019), it can be seen that around 75% of missing people return within twenty-four

hours of going missing on their own accord. With more than 380,000 calls for service each year to policing in the United Kingdom (National Crime Agency, 2019) in respect of missing persons, one way to reduce the demand on policing services would be to exclude the ability for immediate reporting of missing persons. While this may be a controversial measure, it may ensure only those missing people with the highest concerns for their safety take up police time and energy. Together with the more people-orientated reasons for a dark figure, many of the respondents also pointed to information technology systems and the use of IT systems as another reason for there being a dark figure.

#### 4.3.2 Technology and recording systems: their role in invisibility

Contributing to organisational cultures of invisibility is the police use of IT systems for the recording and management of missing persons incidents. During the police recording of incidents, an incident or occurrence is entered into a command and control system in the first instance and later transferred to a case management or integrated management system. For missing persons, many different category types may be used to disguise the fact that a person is being reported as missing or to avoid recording as 'missing', by recording them as 'concern for welfare' 'concern for safety' and similar category types. This may be done for reasons around demand and resource management as missing persons' episodes can be challenging, time consuming and fraught with risk. In some ways, this is similar to the old practice of 'cuffing' crime (see 'When to call the police?' sub-section *supra*). 'Cuffing' crime has more or less been eradicated through the use of national crime recording standards and while there are national standards for incident recording (NPIA, 2011), these appear to be regularly misconstrued so that missing people are recorded as 'concern for safety' rather than in the category of 'missing persons' leading, on some occasions, to a failure to safeguard an individual properly (HMICFRS, 2015). These methods of failing to properly record missing persons may lead to a lack of meaningful oversight of a missing episode or case or a lack of a thorough investigation of a case,

"So, what we know, we know the Children's Society and other agencies have said that many thousands of cases, I can't remember what percentage it was, but quite a significant number of cases [actually 68%] where **members of the public just don't report to the police in the first place**. That's the first issue.

The second issue is the **disparity across the country in the way that forces record their missing**, firstly, which goes back to the national standard for incident recording codes. One force some years ago, according to the Bureau report said that **60% of its missing persons cases were incorrectly coded as concern for safety**, which means that those cases would **not have been given the priority that a missing persons investigation** and oversight by supervisors that a missing persons investigation needed. It also meant that forces would shoot themselves in the foot because they didn't understand or shine a light on what problem of missing in their area was ...” [Eric]

“Because they were **under-recording significantly under the wrong category** also meant that the Bureau [now UK Missing Persons Unit] were **not getting the notifications on missing children**, it also meant that the **local authorities were not getting those notifications** either and so they **could not understand** the issues around missing children or those who would go missing repeatedly. There were the risks, there was a whole bundle of challenges regarding risks, vulnerability and information sharing. That's a, that's a concern for safety. The other issue which has got better in my force but still remains an issue, I think in pockets around the country is the, whilst forces record people as missing, they're not actually putting them on a missing persons system which creates issues in terms of what otherwise I've just said. Not **having effective systems** to tell you how many missing people there were, or how many missing persons reports, the individuals and reports. There are some forces that can able to tell you how many incidents they have, but not how many people that relates to.” [Eric]

Through these insightful responses from Eric and building on arguments introduced in the ‘Cultural issues’ sub-section *supra*, the risk and actuality of becoming invisible increase through the mis-classification of missing due, in part, to the constraints imposed by IT systems which, for simplicity of operation, use drop-down menus of options to classify occurrences. Misclassification is also due, in part, to organisational culture promoting thoughts and realities that demand and resource management is necessary and because missing persons’ episodes can be challenging, time consuming and fraught with risk. Risk, reputation and complaints against the police are discussed in a sub-section of Part Three, *post*.

The designs and constraints of IT systems are picked up by Terpstra and colleagues (2019) asserting that the police are more dependent on ‘system information’ at the cost of direct and ‘personal’ information,

‘The information of the police has become increasingly dependent on the frames and categories of computer systems (Ericson and Haggerty, 1997). This creates the risk that decisions by the police will often not be able to escape the (ir)rationality of (police) computer systems: decisions are only made if the computer system asks for it, ...’ (Terpstra *et al.*, 2019, p. 350).

With the ever-increasing dependency on IT systems, Terpstra *et al.* identify a shift from the ‘street level bureaucrat’ (Lipsky, 1980) through a ‘screen-level bureaucrat’ to a ‘system-level bureaucrat’ with the direct consequence of reducing officer discretion and importantly minimising direct and personal contact with (from the *missing* viewpoint) a family member reporting a missing person,

‘... over the past decades the police have become more dependent on computers and computer systems, resulting in important changes in relations and work processes. For several decades a shift has been going on from what Lipsky (1980) called street-level bureaucracy, first to screen-level bureaucracy then to system-level bureaucracy (Bovens and Zouridis, 2002; Buffat, 2015; Reddick, 2005). Traditionally street-level police officers had considerable discretion and direct relations with citizens. Then the relationship between the police and citizens became increasingly mediated by the computer screen. This still left officers with considerable factual discretion. Next, with system-level bureaucracy citizens only have to deal with the computer (system). The discretion has been largely replaced from street- or screen-level officers to computer specialists and designers of the systems. It is only in exceptional cases that there is still room for direct and personal contact with citizens.’ (Terpstra *et al.*, 2019, p. 350).

Using the perspective of *missing*, systems dictate the type and style of information to be recorded rather than allowing for the breadth and depth of a person, their character and personhood to be captured. Acknowledging that discretionary activities by officers reclaim visibility of the *missing*, it is likely that any reduction of discretion will lead to less visibility. Moving on from technology systems, the next sub-sections start to expose issues connected with police recording processes and keeping a connection with a person throughout the recording process.

#### 4.3.3 The police recording process

It is worth reflecting on police recording processes: a person calls the police to report a family member missing. The police call handler/operator makes a record in a command and control system (C&C system) and creates an incident

which may be known by several different terms, for example, as a CAD in the Metropolitan Police Service. The record of the missing episode may then be moved, often automatically, from a command and control system to a case management system (such as Merlin or Compact) or to an integrated records management system (such as Niche RMS or Northgate's Connect).

Many forces manage the first few hours of an episode on a C&C system before transferring a case to a dedicated case management system for further work. This may be due to the short duration of the majority of missing episodes with 75% of cases concluded with person found or returned safe and well within 24 hours (National Crime Agency, 2019). Once on a dedicated system, all the case notes and actions are managed on this system but deployments and responses to a deployment in connection with a case may still be recorded on a C&C system. The recording of missing persons by the authorities is known to be a reductive process (Edkins, 2011) and inevitably some information will be lost in the transfer of data between systems perhaps leading to a further reduction of identity. Frederick points to this during his interview,

"At the moment **we have a duplicate system**. A command and control log is created initially and then if it's deemed to be missing or absent, because we are still running under an older policy at the moment, **it then goes on to Compact at some stage**. But when its first reported whether it's missing or absent until it goes on to Compact **it stays on the command control system and it's not easily searchable to find every case**. You have to do a, sort of, free text search and **hope you pick up on most of them**. But that will change as we are going to get an integrated system over the next couple of years, so the plan is to change that and improve it. That's a risk that's been identified and **a change in IT is going to reduce that**". [Frederick]

At the same time, data in any system will rely on accurate and timely data entry by officers involved in a case and staff in control rooms and contact centres. The time officers have for data entry will depend on other demands on their time which may constrain the time available to officers as Bryan points out,

"... **the data is only as good as what people put in** ... the IT we have facilitates you to record all this detail and **it always depends on the interview** ... the time of day ... and the correctness you have (on the details)." [Bryan]



Eric felt that police recording of missing children, especially, was really good and in general, all missing persons were recorded well. But he took the view that some categories of missing person may not be well recorded rather than data on particular cases,

“... There has been a clear issue in **not recording cases of modern-day slavery**, we perhaps didn't know what modern slavery ... and there may be **an issue with not recording or investigating cases where it's a lifestyle choice**. And those initial reports to us have been marked off as a lifestyle choice where actually very little has been done in terms of basic investigation and support for that person it's been marked off as a conscious decision and is safe and well as opposed to being missing ...” [Eric]

It can be seen that police recording of missing persons creates a partial record of a person and that the transfer of records across IT systems enables the potential loss of data; consequentially, invisibility of the missing person may be created. The reductive nature of recording processes may be ameliorated by keeping a connection with a missing person during data entry and the next subsection points to this issue.

#### 4.3.4 Recording processes: keeping a connection - identity, character and personhood

After talking through the dark figure of missing with the respondents, they were asked about their views on recording processes: the effect the recording process might have on revealing identity or of understanding the character of a missing person and how the officer might keep a connection with someone who is missing or their family.

The realisation that the police recording process is a reductive and objectifying process comes from Edkins (2011). Edkins makes the point that the uniqueness of a person (the ‘person-as-such’) is lost in the translation of what is told to the police (the spoken record) and the recording of the person as missing (the written record). In the written record, the whole entity of the missing person is necessarily reduced and made the object of enquiry; their details must fit into the fields of a computerised record,

‘Whereas the response of those in authority is to provide information that can lead to closure and to moving on, and compensation that can restore the financial stability of those left, and, sometimes, criminal prosecutions that can provide a form of justice, the

relatives of the missing are responding to something quite different: to the unique person who is missing or lost. What is missing is the who—the person-as-such not the subject of the law or a compensation claim. In their procedures in relation to the missing, even voluntary agencies risk making the missing into objects once more—objects of policy, measurable and accountable.’ (Edkins, 2011, p. 12)

Fyfe et al. (2015) touch on the issue of recording too in terms of ‘officers attempts to manufacture certainty’ (p. 276) in missing persons cases through the ‘identifying and acquiring’ information phase of an investigation (Innes, 2007). As I have already pointed out, ‘certainty’ is always sought but is often elusive especially when there is a high degree of ‘moral ambiguity’ in reports which present challenges to the police (Innes, 2002).

The questions were designed to gain an understanding of how an officer kept an attachment to the person during the process of making a formal, police record of a missing person. In other words, how the officer kept the idea that the missing person was a real person, a sentient being with a complex identity and character to preserve, firstly in the police record, in terms of the administration or bureaucracy, and then in the mind, in terms of ‘humanity’. In terms of the research project around (in)visibility, is it possible, despite the reductive and objectifying process of recording a missing person, to keep sufficient visibility of the person-as-such or does the process obscure and start to make the missing person invisible?

The fact that most of the informants did not deal with recording processes due to being in roles that did not require this type of activity meant that were the questions not suitable as the respondents did not have access to the information being sought. Only Eyda and Keith had recent experience of completing the missing persons’ report forms, but neither of them had a current role that involved dealing with families and friends of missing people. Bryan, Chas and Dave have investigatory roles as PoSAs and as such, presented a different view on keeping attachment with the missing person as a person rather than as an entity in a police record, in comparison with other officers.

Whereas Heidi set out a view describing a lack of understanding expressed by officers when dealing with some missing children episodes, pointing to a lack of experience or knowledge that led to poor decision-making and therefore poor recording of an episode,

“... So, PC Bloggs or PC Smith attend and **see this kid’s gone missing again but actually what you don’t realise is what is going on behind the scene,** that is that they were placed into care at five years old, they don’t know who their family are, there’s **just so many human factors behind it** and the vulnerabilities and understand that these children have had **adverse childhood experiences** so you as PC Smith and PC Bloggs, have not had the experience that, umm, say, this young person has, so you will react differently to a crisis as you and I would act differently to crisis. So, yes, I do believe there is a point to understand, **we have to understand that missing persons, you’re talking about the brain of a human being and that can be very hard to manage and react to.**” [Heidi]

This is an interesting quote indicating that invisibility may be generated as the linkage to the wider biography of an individual will often remain hidden during the initial phases of an investigation.

Eyda commented on the need to preserve the real person in multi-agency case conferences as there was a need to understand the reasons for going missing, and to see the missing episode or episodes in the wider context of family relationships, friends, school, employment, as well as potential criminal activity and criminal victimisation (with links to child sexual abuse and exploitation and domestic abuse at the forefront of the officers mind). Attendance and decision-making at case conferences requires the best interests of the child or vulnerable adult to be placed before any other consideration and to realise the ‘best interests’ needs a thoughtful and appreciative understanding of the whole person.

An unexpected outcome of the questions were comments about the process-driven nature of police work. Automatic and rote procedures together with the strict adherence to procedure have already emerged as a theme causing invisibility in the sub-section on ‘Policing priorities and resourcing in relation to missing people’ in Part One and stand out here out here too. The next sub-section analyses the data in relation to the process-driven approach to police work regarding missing persons.

#### 4.3.5 Process-driven police work

The early stages of a missing persons’ investigation rely on the gathering of information, in the first instance from the family or carer of the absent person. A police record must be made and there is much evidence already from the

participants that automatic and rote procedures are followed. For repeat missing persons the collation of information about them has been described as ‘cyclical’ and involves the same administrative burden. For Terpstra *et al.* (2019), police responses become decontextualised as processes are simply being followed. Context is important in *missing* as the background to the absence needs to be understood, evidence of vulnerability may be found, potential locations in which to find the missing person may be revealed and safeguarding measures may be put in place. Without context, a person may never be sufficiently revealed to be found.

From his time as a response officer, Keith, with eleven years’ experience and now a ‘prevent’ officer, stressed the process-driven nature of filling out report forms, “... when I was a response officer everything was process-driven”. He indicated that there was a process for reporting and recording everything to the police and that little thought needed to be applied when completing any record. It was apparent from his responses that his approach, like that of many other officers, was robotic, with much of recording processes described as ‘going through the motions’. This extract from his interview sets out his feelings,

“Yes, but I was response officer for a long time, and, um, **I think I became very robotic in my approach to things**. Umm, I was pretty good at, I was pretty good as a response officer, catching criminals things like that but I think that, not just my, others as well, your approach does become quite robotic and you always almost go through the motions and someone can be talking and talking to you and **you pick out three or four words from that whole conversation in your mind that will put the risk up**, if that makes sense? You become very good at **filtering**, you’re receiving so much information all at the same time your brain just can’t take all that information on. So, from my perspective I became very good at filtering. I could sit at a missing person’s report, for example, someone could be chatting and chatting and chatting and **I’m kind of listening but maybe not actively listening** like and then, boom, **a couple of buzzwords come in there and, boom, I’m switched on and now the risk is going up and up and up**. Sometimes what I’m trying to say, is sometimes I can be quite robotic if I thought it was a run-of-the-mill type of incident, **go through the motions** if you like, but with experience you tend to, you have an idea as to **the ones that perhaps needed that extra attention, those extra few questions, but that’s slightly blasé because we don’t, like we said at the beginning of this conversation, you don’t know when a standard risk is going to,**

**through the course of time, become a high risk based on the circumstances they find themselves in.” [Keith]**

Rapport building with the person reporting is important in eliciting information and encouraging disclosure with ‘asking questions by rote’ as a barrier to effective communication (College of Policing, 2020b, p. 23). An exploration of ‘family talk’ has been undertaken by Parr and Stevenson (2014) who pay attention to examples of interview talk from families who have a person absent. They highlight the ambiguity of emotions and reflect on what is involved in the portrayal of a missing person to the police and the tensions that may be produced,

‘Witnessing is referenced in two ways in the paper. Firstly, in relation to the formal reporting of the absent person and formal witness statements given to the police. Secondly, it is more substantially discussed in the context of broader forms of what might be called ‘witness talk’, in which families reflect on the less formal ways in which they have discussed and related the character and personhood of their absent member to the police and others.’ (Parr and Stevenson, 2014, p. 298.)

The paper specifically targets what families have to say about how the police, in particular, seem to fail to respond appropriately to their witness talk and the evidence provided by Keith, above, indicates the potential for an inadequate response to a family talking through the narrative around their missing person. The type of officer response provided by Keith is also perhaps indicative of the repetitive nature of calls for service especially around missing people, when an officer is perhaps not actively listening to the whole story being narrated but is alert to cue words and key phrases that require immediate attention as risk escalates and the need for safeguarding action becomes pressing. Despite this listening for cue words and phrases, Keith made the point that response officers might not necessarily have a proper connection to a missing person. While time constraints apply in the life of a busy response officer, the sheer number of calls attended, and people seen may lead to complacency and pressure to complete jobs as quickly as possible. He remarks,

“... I think **time constraints come into it. I think maybe you become a little complacent** ... Because you are **dealing with so many incidents**. Some days you can, some days on a crime car you could pick up four or five reports and a couple of prisoners. Um, I think there’s a set, I don’t think there’s anything in writing, I think there’s a, what type of missing person you are going to **I don’t**

think there's a made-up clock about how much time you are expected to be at that job if that makes sense? So if it's a kind of **everyday missing person who goes missing all the time I think questions would be asked of you if you were still dealing with it four hours later but, it's like I said, if you are dealing with a high risk person and you're still dealing with it four hours later that would be expected of you.**" [Keith]

The 'everydayness' of *missing* comes to the forefront again in Keith's remarks, the everydayness that may lead, in policing, to the automatic responses in the creation of records, inadvertently avoiding the application of thought, as can be seen from Chas' similar comments,

"But we go through **the automatic**, we go **through a rote procedure** whereby, well as you know, as soon as people get reported missing, we go through **the same administrative burden** as we do, as you know, as we do for a high risk missing person, quite often." [Chas]

The process-driven approach has also been noticed by police partners such as Karen Robinson, then of the charity, Missing People who commented when discussing definitions of missing and risk categories, that "following a rote process once a [risk] category is established" is typical of the police response (Robinson, 2019). Process-driven approaches have emerged in Missing People's research paper, 'A Safer Return' (2019), and from Josie Allan, a research lead at the same charity, presenting at the National Police Missing Persons' Working Group meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2019, "there's a very robotic and process-driven approach in the way police conduct return interviews particularly in repeat cases".

Re-current themes are present in this analysis: the everydayness of *missing*, the repetitive nature of calls relating to missing persons, and time constraints may lead to the narratives from families receiving less than adequate attention, all conspiring to reduce the visibility of the missing person. Added to these themes is the strict adherence to a process, sometimes automatically and robotically performed, as an apparently all-consuming element of not just police work but of social work and other services in the public sector.

In continuing with the reporting and recording of a missing person by the police and as a consequence of the relationship between the reporting family and the police, 'witness talk' (Parr *et al.*, 2007 and Parr and Stevenson, 2014) and being

drawn into an emotionally turbulent situation, some of the respondents referenced the emotional demands of policing, especially in *missing*. Emotional labour as a topic or theme is considered next.

#### 4.3.6 Emotional labour

In an early study Rees and Smith (2007) identified a traumatic circle of silence within policing with the expression of emotion suppressed as a manifestation of police culture (p. 273). Daily police officers engage with emotionally demanding work and are required to display the appropriate emotions in response. While the traumatic nature of policing is now well recognised and services are made available with the aim of improving the psychological well-being of police officers and staff (for example the Oscar Kilo website), emotional labour and burnout are feature highly in academic literature (see for example, Turgoose *et al.*, 2017; MacEachern *et al.*, 2018; Lennie *et al.*, 2019; Burnett *et al.*, 2019; and, Curran, 2020). While much of the literature is American or Australian-based, all points the significant emotional labour expended in the conduct of case work by the police. Attention is drawn to the impact of compassion or empathy fatigue as the ‘cost of caring’ in the consultation draft on responding to vulnerability guidelines released by the College of Policing (2020b).

Jindal-Snape (2019) refers to emotional labour and the trauma of not seeing a resolution in case work. She draws attention to the fact that social workers would normally see a conclusion to a case whereas a police team might see a conviction at court but not see the outcome from the perspective of a victim (Jindal-Snape, 2019). This lack of ‘cognitive closure’ in case workers translates into *missing* as much as police officers and staff members who may only see sections of a case rather than the whole case as it does for families missing a loved one (and cognitive closure links to work on ambiguous loss led by Pauline Boss, see for example, Boss and Yeats, 2014). The question is posed, ‘Is there a functional need for cognitive closure in policing? Certainly, from my experience in missing, the more cases where the outcomes are known to the officer(s) involved, the more satisfied the officers are with their work in the knowledge that a family has peace and comfort in the case resolution found.

Emotional labour was exposed by the interview participants with Keith suggesting that he resisted being drawn into the emotional side of his work and

Dave apparently overwhelmed by it. Keith preferred to describe the nature of his relationship with many reporting family members as ‘matter-of-fact’, which may be seen as ‘business-like’ or unemotional. When asked about being drawn into or resisting emotional attachment to cases or to families, he said,

“I always tried to resist emotional attachment really because it’s exhausting, you know if you’re going to 56789 different jobs and you become emotionally attached to each one of those, by the end of the day you are, you’d be fried, wouldn’t you? Umm, so **I tried not to become emotionally attached to missing people’s jobs, obviously I tried to show some empathy and some understanding, I wasn’t cold hard hearted, but I certainly took myself to a certain level and that’s where it stopped, if that makes sense?** Umm, I was very matter-of-fact, yeah, very matter-of-fact.” [Keith]

Keith’s caution for involvement contrasts with that of Dave who, in answering the same question said,

“Yes, it’s very difficult. Yes, this one was especially when I ended up, very rarely, but his father wanted to speak to me. His father was an ex-Royal Marine and an ex-police officer and he was asking me some very obvious ... **he knew what to ask and he was asking me a few questions and he knew I was looking for a body. I wasn’t looking for his son alive. That was quite a difficult phone call.** And yes, **I can remember being in tears and other people being in tears when we recovered the body** [of a soldier who drowned in his barracks] and **the relief when we found his body was unbelievable.**” [Dave]

My interpretation here is that the difference in the responses of the two officers relates to their roles with Keith as a response officer and Dave as a PolSA. Keith very much started investigations every day for someone else to conclude while Dave may have spent several weeks immersed in a single case seeking a successful outcome while at the same time realising that he may have to deal with a person who had died during their missing episode and relate the tragic circumstances to a family.

It may be the matter-of-factness reported by Keith is needed to get through the day’s work for a response officer, with only so much officer time and emotion being available for each job but, at the same time, the officer doing his or her best in the circumstances,

“... I think you need to word it in such a way that you are not going around upsetting everyone at the job. I like **to leave a job with people reassured** but



they will **only get so much of that**, if you like, and the rest of it would be a **structured conversation with, with my goal in mind**, which is whatever that goal may be in relation to **the quickest way of sitting with that person to getting the answers I need without any of the kind of human side** in the middle, if that makes sense, where people talk and go off on tangents and all the rest of it.” [Keith]

Keith also pointed to the role of the police community support officer whose job, he felt, it was to build relationships with families and communities rather than his as a response officer. Emotional labour appears to have dual actions on invisibility: on one hand, if emotional involvement with a family is resisted then it is more likely that the missing person’s identity, character and personhood may not be fully understood leaving them less visible; on the other hand, immersion in case material, involvement in a protracted investigation and the physical search for a missing person with all the accompanying emotional attachment and labour should lead to increasing and then certain visibility of the missing person.

Emotional labour can also be seen in the context of emotional geographies: an exploration of the elaborate key intersections between emotions and spatial concepts, reflecting,

‘... on the ordinary and widely-acknowledged social-cultural geographies through which, on some emotional terrains but maybe not all, the emotional register [the talk of emotions] does become rather impoverished. Possibilities for emotional exchange are removed from such terrains, repressed by many of the people involved in accordance with assumed local norms and expectations ...’ (Parr *et al.*, 2007, p. 98).

‘Witnessing talk’ (Parr *et al.*, 2007 and Parr and Stevenson, 2014) may have the outcomes other than, for example, emotional labour, as the officer involved in listening to the narrative of a family will also need to decide what has been omitted from the narrative in order to ask more questions and to elicit further information. There will be times when a family is reticent to provide all the information that is asked of them. The next sub-section discusses the creation of (in)visibility by reporting families.

#### 4.3.7 Identity, personhood and the creation of (in)visibility

While a reasonable description may be recorded dependent of the recall of person reporting, it is not possible to record a full history, full identity, complete

lifestyle, character and capture the essence of the missing person in the time available at first encounter as Keith explains, “I don’t think you can necessarily have that connection [in order to obtain the necessary information] ...” and he cites a variety of factors such as complacency and time constraints with other incidents. With time constraints, officers may feel pushed to record the missing person quickly and with less accuracy. This is perhaps a difficult part of the missing event, trying to capture the whole identity and character of a person in a matter of an hour so. It is as if, faced with a seemingly impossible task, the recording officer may automatically ‘lose sight’ of someone, all the while acknowledging that we all remain missing to each other to some extent.

Assuming that not all the necessary and relevant information is gleaned at first report, several follow-up visits or telephone calls to the informant may be necessary. This method of continually collecting partial information is always seen in major crime investigation rooms and played out in television crime drama shows like *Vera* (ITV Productions, 2020). In serious crime cases it is referred to as ‘victimology’ (police jargon and a quasi-scientific term, literally the study of a victim).

As a PoISA, Dave describes the process,

“We have, **we want to know absolutely everything to help** our profile and understand them. We will often ask for loads of information, about medication, about mental health, their previous life, their previous work, friends and family. **We want as much information as possible** and will often get, will often keep **asking** officers who are with **the reporting person more and more questions.**” [Dave]

When asked if all the information needed for decisions was available in the first instance, the answer was a definitive ‘no’; Dave said that he had to probe for more detail in nearly every instance,

“Nearly every time. For example, we spend a week on call every few weeks so I’ll be sat at home, I could be asleep in bed and I’ll get a phone call about high-risk missing person. I’ll have a look at the job on my laptop and see what information I can glean from the log and then **I will end up with a load of questions** and I will have to fire them off, usually via email to the inspector or the sergeant. **I need to know this, this, this, and this** and then I can start forming the search strategy and guidance.” [Dave]

The quest for certainty of information is again revealed here along with a purposeful or otherwise disguising of a person. One has only to what any detective or crime drama on television to see the portrayal of disguise, dishonesty, economies of truth by families involved with the police. There may be a suspect in a family, someone in the family may be a victim or may be a missing person, there is an inevitable challenge to the investigating officer to uncover the truth surrounding an incident or crime. Reasons for economies of truth usually lie in shame, embarrassment, guilt and likelihood of 'skeletons in the cupboard' but can also lie in a lack of knowledge. Goffman (1959) refers to dark secrets or double secrets,

'... there are what are sometimes called 'dark' secrets. These consist of facts about a team [in our case a family] which it knows and conceals and which are incompatible with the image of self that the team attempts to maintain before its audience [the police investigation]. Dark secrets are, of course, double secrets: one is the crucial fact that it is hidden and another is the fact that crucial facts have not been openly admitted.' (Goffman, 1959, p. 141.)

The same challenges present themselves in missing cases with Heidi suggesting that the reporting person may add to invisibility, in this case through a lack of knowledge rather than any deliberate hiding of the truth,

"Missing is heavily, **the missing person is heavily influenced by the person who is reporting them** as missing, so we could have a teacher report someone missing and we will go on very little, we may go on very little information. But then we might have **a parent report someone missing** the next time and there will be **much bigger understanding of who that person is.**" [Heidi]

Heidi went on to describe how a complete picture of a missing person may be built up, but only through the use of a multi-agency database which allows police and health and social, education and third sector partners to input and share data in relation to a missing person. Heidi considered this type of database, rather than just a police information database, as essential in understanding a true identity and character for a missing person, "... and then if we have the full picture of that individual coming in, we will have their full identity. Police can only go on what they have and obviously that is a real challenge for us." Having only a data-led human picture may render people's *se/ves* (in Edkins, 2011 words, 'the person-as-such') invisible.

This raises an interesting question about the search for complete visibility. How realistic is it to be able to achieve a complete picture of a person? And what does it mean to ‘know absolutely’ everything? Edkins (2019) discusses the ambiguity of personhood itself, and the way in which,

‘... we not only do not ‘know’ anyone else for certain – who they are or what they might do next – we do not even ‘know’ ourselves. Living with that unknowing, not trying to pin people down, define and characterise them, turns out to be an essential part of what it means to let a person be a ‘person’, not an object. In other words, incompleteness, insecurity and vulnerability are essential to personhood. (Edkins, 2019, p. 5.)

There probably is no way of knowing people entirely and also probably no need to do so; one only has to know sufficient to drive police actions in the search for a missing person. The continuing theme of ‘certainty’ (and the sub-title of this thesis: ‘Desperately seeking certainty’) and its elusiveness is evident throughout these sub-sections. More on identity, personhood and agency can be found in Chapter Six.

There is also an argument that attempting to keep an attachment to a missing person is not the job of the police. This perhaps follows from arguments about the role of police and police culture (see, for example, Bowling *et al.*, 2019) and a further discussion is developed in Chapter Five.

Trying to understand the person-as-such seems a challenging notion and obtaining a complete picture of *self* has so many different qualities or characteristics, for example, temporal, spatial, descriptive (and pictorial), biometric and as well as emotional and psychological (who are we presenting as today after Goffman, 1959), with each contributing with varying effect on the (in)visibility of missing persons. The next sub-section considers how statistics have an impact on (in)visibility: are missing people hidden further in the overwhelming numbers relating to ‘missing’.

#### 4.3.8 Statistics and the creation of (in)visibility

The overwhelming statistics around missing persons: nearly 400,000 calls for police service, with 287,000 police missing incidents created involving 186,000 people in the United Kingdom (National Crime Agency, 2019) have a reductive potential in relation to recognising that behind every data entry is a real person who has gone missing and a real connection to at least 12 other people

comprising family and friends (Henderson and Henderson, 1998). There is a strong argument that the weight of figures which are used regularly, without reference to or recognition of a person, in police performance management, training sessions and workshops disguises the individual identities of those missing.

When asked about keeping connection to people when presenting missing persons data, several respondents agreed that they would use case studies, but only occasionally. In most cases, the audience for the presentation demanded just the performance information or data. WPC Software's 'Compact' case management system (for missing persons) has a dashboard presented to the user revealing numbers of people missing that day or in the previous week. It does show names and locations for repeat missing people but in general the information is used from a performance management perspective and not to understand people (the person-as-such).

Of the respondents, Bryan, Frederick and Heidi provided some explanation of how they kept a person or people 'alive' as a real person, rather than hiding them in the statistics. Bryan used case studies to highlight the point in presentations but not in statistical returns used for performance management purposes,

"But, yes, it's always good to put a visual representation of who they are, a picture of them, **a picture of them in happier surroundings**, if you like."  
[Bryan]

Frederick took a slightly different view, saying,

"I think **the statistics are looking at volumes**, the populations, **as opposed to the individuals**, so would use that descriptive maybe for our focus where our work might be ... but **when you are talking about individual cases it's then you are talking more about the individual**, what does he do to protect or reduce demand or improve outcomes in individual cases so **the two complement each other**". [Frederick]

In contrast, Heidi presented a short vignette in interview when discussing attachment to people in the process of compiling statistics,

"I think it's important to understand that **these are people** ... the prime example, I'll tell you about was a young girl who is 12, who resents being with them, **she's against being female, she identifies herself as male**, she comes

from a ... she's from a disadvantaged family, she's gone missing once but there's been various concerns regarding it ... and actually understanding this girl had gone missing and what can we do as partner agencies to really safeguard this girl and **give that girl a voice to talk about who she is**, give her an opportunity to talk about matters that are prominent for her. So, **to understand that there is a person behind the missing episode**". [Heidi]

Statistics play a useful role in making *missing* visible to managers, senior leaders and policy makers, within and outside of policing. The scale of the demand and its resource implications are things that cannot be ignored and it is seen that the various missing persons' annual data reports (see for example, National Crime Agency, 2019) are extensively used in government departments to design policy such as in the refreshing of the Cross-Government strategy for missing children and adults (Home Office, 2011) and in the re-write of Department of Education missing from home and care guidance. Statistics from the UK Missing Persons Unit were also used as contributions to legislation formulation in respect of the Presumption of Death Act 2013 and the Guardianship (Missing Persons) Act 2017. It can be seen then that statistics hide individual missing people but reveal the population of missing as 'a collective' to both inform and provide a trigger for action.

The sections above reveal contributions to a dark figure, such as those unreported in the belief that police interest in the case will not be ignited until sometime time-lapse has occurred. Even once reported to the police, they may remain hidden or invisible as missing persons due to IT system design, classification errors or deliberate misclassification by the police in order to reduce risk, demand or police activity. Visibility and invisibility may also be compounded through the creation and use of statistics. The final sub-sections next move the discussion onto a fuller explanation of the 'dark figure' of missing as people not reported at all to the police.

#### 4.3.9 The dark figure – introduction

The first question in this group of questions (see the Topic Guide in Appendix C) was seeking to find views on unreported missing people due to cultural issues, unwillingness to report episodes to the police, not knowing when and to whom to report a missing person, and so on. Many of the respondents discussed children missing from education as not properly recorded as missing

by police. There is the argument that these children are not truly missing in the sense that the wider public would understand as missing. Education authorities do keep records of children failing to attend school either because they are being kept away by parents or, in the old-fashioned terms, are ‘truanting’ or ‘playing hookey’. There are arguments that being missing from education is not a police concern but, at the same time, being missing from education ought to be taken into consideration as a risk factor when managing a missing episode reported to the police.

Although Heidi (a missing persons’ co-ordinator) provided this response,

“There is that, there is that unreported, there is **a gap** I feel, there is **a failure in the education provision** in the sense that we have **children missing from education**, but they’re **not missing in the police terminology** because they are never reported missing so if a child’s attendance is 24% or, I had a case where they had a 0.3% attendance. What are they doing? Mum says they are at school, when clearly they are not at school and yes, to me, that is an unreported missing case.” [Heidi]

Keeping with the issue of missing children, Jack (a response inspector) reported, “... there are particular children who go missing that perhaps aren’t reported to us and go unseen.” Here, perhaps, referring to children who ‘sofa-surf’: children who constantly move from one friend’s home to another friend’s home; keeping out of contact with their parents who may be disinclined to be responsible for their children. Jack’s comments could reflect the view that people living outside ‘average social areas’ (which I have interpreted as people marginalized by communities or society) may not be reported as missing to the police (see also next sub-section on ‘Undeserving victims’). This type of behaviour is explored in The Children’s Society, Still Running series of research (Safe on the streets research team, 1999; Rees and Lee, 2005 and Rees, 2011). Children who are missing from education and sofa-surfing children who are not reported as missing to the police will not feature in police reports and the latter group will be unseen in children’s services as well leading to an invisibility that will be difficult to remove. Unreported missing cases (whether unreported to the police or other statutory body) is considered as a leading cause of invisibility in connection with missing persons.

There are many other types of unreported missing people that the respondents reported, and these typologies and terminologies, such as ‘unmissed people’;

‘the undeserving missing and ungrievable lives’; ‘criminal exploitation’ and ‘cultural issues’ are discussed in the sub-sections below. Unreported missing people are always likely to be unseen, or invisible and their ‘unseenness’ rather than ‘missingness’ is a contributing factor to the overall theme of invisibility which runs through the thesis.

#### 4.3.10 Unmissed people

Jenny Edkins introduces the idea of unmissed people proposing that some people are invisible anyway; people who die alone with no-one noticing they are not there. These people have no apparent ties, no relations and no one concerned for them (Edkins, 2011, p. 6). The UK Missing persons Unit database, Hermes, contains references to over 1,200 unidentified bodies and remains unclaimed by relatives. BBC News reports show more than 3,800 public health funerals (previously known as paupers funerals) took place in the 2017-2018 financial year in the absence of any known relatives to pay for the funeral (BBC News, 2019). Edkins suggests that we should think about the unmissed in another way,

‘... those who are not present to a Western imagination in the first place, those who are invisible to many scholars of international relations, with its focus on the world seen from a particular perspective, as if that were the only one. These persons could be said to be “missing” in a different and arguably more important way ... Their absence ... is a more fundamental one, so fundamental that we don’t even realize they are missing from our parochial picture of the world. They are the missing missing, the doubly missing.’ (Edkins, 2011, p. 6)

As examples, she quotes the missing from the Twin Towers whose absence could not be reported due to their immigration status, and groups in the United Kingdom who are not reported as missing: missing asylum-seekers and missing migrant children who disappear to avoid deportation by the authorities. Of all the various groups of people discussed by the research participants, these last two groups were not mentioned although references were made to ‘Modern slavery’ and ‘Cultural issues’ which are reported in individual sub-sections below. Plainly, unmissed people and the missing missing will remain invisible.



#### 4.3.11 Undeserving missing and ungrievable lives

The idea that there is a section of society and of local communities who are marginalized by local services, especially the police, as ‘undeserving victims’, is discussed in Sklansky (2006) and built upon by Charman (2017 and 2019). This is an interesting extension of the observations of police culture from the late 1970s and early 80s when notions of ‘toe-rags’ and ‘the scum’ provided insights into how the police constructed populations. Some of the first expositions on police occupational culture were by Reiner (1978) and slightly later by Smith and Gray (1983). In police classifications and stereo-typing of the public, a number of sections of society are seen troublesome by the police, including alcoholics, drug addicts, sex workers, the unemployed and rough sleepers; all seen as ‘low status, powerless, and problematic’ (Bowling *et al.*, 2019, p. 127). Indeed, Lee (1981, pp. 51-53) goes so far as to call these groups ‘police property’ arguing that the police have been given permission by the majority of the population to deal with them as the police see fit. Calls for service from these groups are likely to be seen as ‘rubbish’: unworthy of attention, difficult to deal with and likely to be the fault of the complainant themselves (Smith and Gray, 1983). ‘Tasty villains’ is another expression used by police to describe professional thieves inclined to use violence to pursue their criminality (Foster, 1990). In keeping to references to Bourdieu, this is seen as the ‘habitus’, the structuring of expected and acceptable behaviours in organisations such as the police (Bourdieu, 1977 and 1991).

The corollary of the ‘undeserving’ is that there genuine missing persons who are deserving of attention and a comparison here with media representations of deserving victims or deserving missing persons can be made (also see later in Part Three of this chapter – ‘Publicity and the media’). As much as there are groups of people considered as underserving, there will be groups considered as deserving of police attention. These groups may include those who have the ability to make police life ‘uncomfortable’ through political or media interest and increased (and likely to be unwanted by the police) political and media scrutiny of an investigation. They may also include groups whose cases when resolved produce increased satisfaction for the case officers and bring with that satisfaction, desired positive political and media reviews and accolades.

In considering if there is a sense in which the ‘undeserving missing’ or the deserving missing might exist in police thinking, it is worth recalling the examples given by the respondents, Dave (a PoISA) and Chas (an operational sergeant and PoISA), above, and reproduced here for ease,

“Umm. It’s prioritised at the time depending on the person that is missing like **if it’s a missing three-year-old child that would become the priority**. If it’s missing, we had a **missing drug user not so long ago that wasn’t**, and you could see **the difference in how that was dealt with ... not so much resources and no-one gripped the job up**.” [Dave]

“Umm, err, I think the only, the proper concern when things get into the press about when people are missing, especially children or elderly folk, it becomes an area of concern. Our repeat missing people, our repeat missing children, and the **public concern tends to be why are the police spending time on it**. If you look at **social media when we publicise say our, our typical 14 or 15-year-old lad who goes missing every weekend**, invariably the **public response is why are the police wasting their time on this?** And they will quite often comment, like, this guy was publicised last weekend and the police found him safe and well and he was reported the weekend before and found safe and well so **why are you wasting time, if it was my burglary ...**” [Chas]

It is possible to see the missing drug-user from Dave’s example falling into the ‘police property’ category of Lee (1981) or as ‘troublesome’ (Bowling *et al.* 2019). And in Chas’ example, the public on social media appear to be giving permission to the police to ignore the repeat missing teenager by urging the police not to waste their time.

Another example of an ‘undeserving missing’ case is presented in the following case study involving two women.

Mary Jane Mustafa, a 38-year-old homeless, sometime sex worker, drug addict and alcoholic and Hungarian national, Henriett Szucs, a 34-year-old sex worker - Mustafa was reported missing by her family in May 2018 and Szucs was not reported missing by family in either the United Kingdom or Hungary. The Mustafa case received little attention by the police after preliminary enquiries failed to locate her. She was regarded as a low risk missing person despite her obvious vulnerabilities. After six months specialist services from the National Crime Agency were called in after an internal police review. Six months later and following police enquiries unconnected with Mustafa’s disappearance, the bodies of both women were found in a freezer in a flat in Canning Town, London; both women appeared to be homicide victims. A man later appeared in court charged with two counts of preventing a lawful burial and the homicide investigation continues (case records held by UK MPU and press reporting).

Case study 3: Mary Jane Mustafa and Henriett Szucs

In this tragic case, Szucs falls into Edkins category of the 'missing missing' as she was unmissed by her family and friends and Mustafa was someone that the police apparently ignored due to her low social and economic status and perhaps due to her ethnicity; she was thus invisible in terms of the need for police action. Again keeping with references to Bourdieu (1977 and 1991), it can be seen that both women possessed low cultural and economic capital and their 'field' was drug addiction, alcoholism and homelessness in part suppressed by earning money through sex work in Newham, already an area of economic deprivation in comparison with many other London boroughs. My own view is that these are really unusual cases and, having been in policing since the 1970s, that police culture has moved on to be more accepting of difference, that police officers place value on every person and have a regard for vulnerability and human frailty in all its guises. A fuller explanation of police culture is provided in Chapter Five.

The concept of social exclusion argue Kiepal *et al.*, 2012, can also be used to explore the relationship between the phenomenon of missing and people and groups who may be socially and economically disadvantaged. Kiepal *et al.* identified excluded groups who faced a higher risk of going missing than other included or engaged groups, 'social exclusion examines structural processes that shut out particular groups and individuals from social relationships and economic activities to which other people in society have access' (2012, p. 138). The researchers found that social exclusion has an impact on certain individuals and groups already vulnerable to discrimination and segregation. Concerning missing people, the Canadian study showed that excluded groups such as disadvantaged youth, women escaping domestic violence, Aboriginal people, and visible minorities go missing in high numbers with international studies confirming the findings and adding that a legacy of homelessness is common in missing persons (2012, p. 138; Biehal *et al.*, 2003 and James *et al.*, 2008). Structural root causes of social exclusion are also picked up in Tyler's 2013 work.

In wider society the same troublesome relationship can be seen to persist with Tyler (2013) arguing that 'public monsterring' of unemployed people (those who do not or cannot work) is a direct consequence of neo-liberal economic and social policies rather than an occupational culture. Tyler suggests that,

‘stigmatization operates as a form of governance which legitimizes the reproduction and entrenchment of inequalities and injustices which impact upon us all.’ (Tyler, 2013, p. 212). She concludes that it is possible to imagine what it means to be ‘abject’: the consequences of police policies and systems which have the effect of producing you as less than human (p. 213).

It is useful, too, to consider Butler’s (2009) terminology of ‘grievable lives’. Butler argues that one way of considering who we are is to ask whose lives are valuable, and therefore mourned when they have disappeared, and whose lives which might be ungrievable, ‘an ungrievable life is one that cannot be mourned because it has never lived, that is, it has never counted as a life at all.’ (Butler, 2015, blog). Currently, grievability is perhaps most evident in the recent ‘black lives matter’ campaigns and protests (see Davis, 2017; Taylor, 2019 and Black Lives Matter, 2019).

When considering the two quotes above from Dave and Chas and the case example, it is possible to apply Butler’s argument to the world of missing, in the context of reporting missing persons to the police and the early police response (on which the analysis is developed fully below). From the police and public attention paid to the cases it can be seen that the missing drug dealer, the repeat missing teenager and the two sex workers start to fade away (become invisible) in the police and public consciousness.

Although the background to her work was war, it is reasonable to transfer ‘grievability’ to the ‘everydayness’ (cited in Part One of this chapter) of missing persons. With around 400,000 calls for service each year, more than a 1000 calls per day, to the police in connection with missing persons (National Crime Agency, 2019), I have argued that the issue of missing persons is very much ‘the everyday’ (Apps, 2017).

With such a high demand on the police service and in partner agencies, it is inevitable that some missing persons’ cases will not get the attention they need or deserve. When combined with factors created by occupational culture, social and economic injustices, the amount of attention applied may be seen as a divisive issue with the plausible suggestion that some people matter more or less than others. Grievability can be seen to play out in other spheres too; for example, in the attention paid by the media and by the public to publicity for

missing people. Slakoff and Fradella (2019) quote Wanzo and Moody *et al.* in their article on missing persons publicity arguing the same point, that white women are somehow worth more than women from racial minority backgrounds,

'In news stories about white missing women and girls, words such as 'perfect,' 'ideal,' 'angelic,' 'golden,' and 'fairy tale' are used to portray privileged, happy lives (Wanzo, 2008, p. 99). Missing minority women are not humanized in the same way, leading to the belief that Whites are somehow more valuable than their counterparts of other racial minority backgrounds' (Moody *et al.*, 2009).

Please note that publicity is discussed at length later in Part Three of this chapter.

#### 4.3.12 Criminal exploitation

Many respondents discussed missing in terms of links or connections to crime or to criminals and criminal groups as causes for not reporting missing people to the police. Jack, a response inspector and community lead, when asked whether he thought there was a dark figure of unreported missing people, immediately referenced criminal exploitation,

"Yes. Yes, and I base that on, if you look at the **child sexual exploitation**, the **county drug lines** that operate in the county, the **hidden crime**, the **modern-day slavery**, I think it's a world that we are tapping into, we have op discovery, for example, that responds to reports of modern slavery and exploitation and we have child sexual exploitation teams run through the investigations unit, umm ... I do think it's **an area of concern, an area of risk** because normally people come to our attention when they are first reported missing or when somebody phones up to express concern about their son or daughter associating with a particular group of people and reporting, discussing certain things with, so, yeah, **there are particular children who go missing that perhaps aren't reported to us and go unseen.**" ([Jack])

Trafficking and modern slavery victims and others subject to coercive control either by a single person with domestic abuse and honour-based violence victims, children being moved (often abroad) for female genital mutilation; or by a group or organised criminal networks when controlling people in slavery, trafficking, gangmasters, child criminal exploitation and child sexual exploitation (now the preferred terminology is child sexual abuse and exploitation, abbreviated to CSAE) were all provided as examples of the dark numbers of

unreported missing people. The relatively new criminal business model, known as 'county lines', involves the movement of children from mainly metropolitan areas to particular suburban and semi-rural markets to supply drugs, firearms and other illegal merchandise using telephone communications (hence the term, 'county lines' referring not to a geographical line but to the telephone line, see National Crime Agency, undated and The Children's Society, undated), was provided by nearly all the respondents as a reason that children were not being reported to the police. Clearly, if reports are not being made to the police or children's services, there will remain a number of groups of missing people who are invisible to the authorities and for whom no safeguarding or protection measures can be taken.

#### 4.3.13 Modern slavery

For slavery victims it was felt that there was a lack of reporting may be due to a family would, most likely, be in a different country and not know to which country their relatives had been taken. No known location for the missing person was another reason why it was thought there was a lack of reporting. Dave, a PolSA and Frederick, a chief inspector, had slightly differing views,

"The figure is probably **bigger than I think**. It is mainly the modern-day slavery ones I'm thinking of, these are the ones that just disappear that's because they got their relatives or friends, so there ... it probably is bigger than I'm thinking, but **it's not huge**." [Dave]

"It's hard for us to say. Obviously, we only see **the reported stuff**. But **we don't really understand it**. My gut feeling is that it's probably not that big, I really don't know. I don't come across many cases of situations that could have been reported as missing but weren't and there would be a whole lot we don't come across as the police anyway so really **it's impossible for me to assess that**." [Frederick]

Both Dave and Frederick's comments perhaps highlight concerns around a lack of understanding of the links between missing migrant people, trafficking and slavery in policing. Awareness of the challenges arising can now be seen and policing, particularly policing by specialist slavery units, is providing investigative and safeguarding solutions (Modern Slavery Police Transformation Unit, 2019). But slavery victims are likely to fall into Edkins (2011) typology of the 'missing missing' and

well as being ‘ungrievable lives’ too in the terminology of Butler (2009 and 2015) and thus be invisible as missing people.

#### 4.3.14 Cultural issues

Having mentioned cultural issues, a short discussion is necessary around quoted reasons for a lack of reporting to the police. Eric, a missing persons co-ordinator, discussed that going ‘missing’ was seen as a crime in some families and pointed to unspecified research where this reason was given for failure to contact the police. Fear of social services and trust and confidence in the police were also discussed,

**“There will be repercussions to that** so, umm, yes, umm, I think there are, that’s quite a moot point, I think. I didn’t actually realise that until I spoke to the charity, Missing People, that actually the first thing that we get is after the initial concerns from the family or the person reporting missing person, I think, they next biggest concern is, **what are the police going to do**, are they going to **take action against me**, are together to take action against the missing person when they return, **is the missing person in trouble**. I still think we’ve got **some way to go in terms of reassuring the public** that, that that’s not the case.” [Eric]

“Yes, I think there are various factors behind such a thing, um, stemming from parental neglect and parental lack of wishing to engage with partner agencies for fear of, OK, if I report my child missing 10 times, **does that mean ‘the soch’** [children’s services] **will come and take my child away**.” [Heidi]

Parent’s fear of children’s services is an enduring issue and is well reported (Barnes, 2016). Parents fear that their children will be taken into care if there are concerns about how well a parent is looking after their child, but the tensions run both ways with children’s services arguing that parents are ‘the enemy of social work’ (Mellon, 2016). With such apparent lack of trust between parents and social services it is perhaps easy to see parents’ reticence, in some circumstances, to report a child missing to the police as it will be known that police always refer missing children to local children’s services.

People who were fearful of authorities, anti-police, or came from particular ethnic groups were thought of as categories or people who may not report someone missing to the police. Eric made the comment,

“Yes, well, I could think about that ... people who have come into contact with the police, **who do not trust the police, people have got a poor opinion of the police will be reticent to contact them.**” [Eric]

Ideas of justice, fairness and equality have been discussed since the inception of the ‘new police’ in 1829. It can be argued that the ideas follow the establishment of the principles underpinning the formation of the police, supposedly designed by Peel, Rowan and Mayne but more likely to have been formulated by Charles Reith in the 1940s (Emsley, 1983), which see public support being essential for effective policing. The ideas are at the heart of democratic policing (Bradford and Quinton, 2014).

Fairness, being seen as impartiality, legitimacy, honesty, fair dealing and freedom from bias all feature in the relatively new agenda of ‘procedural justice’, prevalent since the 1990s (Tyler, 1990 and 2004). These five characteristics of fairness produce visible policing processes and actions countering other elements or themes identified as causing invisibility (for the purposes of this thesis, specifically invisibility in missing persons).

Hough, Jackson and Bradford (2017) argue that a distinction can be drawn between *procedural fairness*: treating people with dignity and respect; according to set rules and policies; listening to what people have to say and explaining reasons for decisions and *outcome fairness*: meaning to produce fair results or consequences for police actions. Policing interventions should also be seen as being proportionate with the crime committed or injury suffered, and the notions of proportionality, legality, accountability, necessity and justification can be seen in the legislative context too, for example in the Investigatory Powers Act, 2016 (Legislation.gov.uk, 2016). A short analysis through the lens of procedural justice is provided in Chapter Five.

It follows then fairness, on both its procedural and outcomes bases, is a foundation on which trust and confidence in policing can be built. An absence of any of the elements of fairness may give rise to a lack of public support, for example in the context of domestic abuse with victim-blaming (Williams and Stanko, 2015) and therefore may be a reason for some sections of society not to report missing people to the police.



Trust and confidence are also matters of concern in the British Crime Survey which found that among the broad ethnic groups, a lower percentage of people with Mixed ethnicity said they had confidence in their local police compared with White people and in every one of the last 5 years, a lower percentage of Black Caribbean people said they had confidence in their local police compared with White British people (Gov.uk, 2018).

In terms of ethnic groups and communities, it was felt by many interviewees that eastern European, Pakistani/Bangladeshi peoples and traveller or gipsy groups may be reluctant to report someone missing to the police. Chas said, "... they're [Romanian groups are] quite insular and they maintain their community groups and police themselves ...". Jack, too, thought that background and cultural issues may have an impact on reporting to the police,

"... we've got a much more diverse cultural society and the communities now are comprised of a mix of cultures and backgrounds and I think that has a bearing on whether or not people report to the police ..." [Jack]

Frederick took a contrary view, stating that he did not notice a difference in reporting between diverse ethnic groups. When asked whether he thought this related to communities' trust and confidence in local policing services, he replied,

"I, well there may be a difference but **I don't think it's down to the trust and confidence** so I imagine that the trust and confidence in the police may be doesn't affect this area as much as maybe some others, because, potentially **it's quite a serious area and if there is genuine concern that your relative has come to harm** then you're probably more **likely to report that to the police** whether you trust them or not, I would think, but I haven't thought that through much." [Frederick]

Other respondents found it difficult to accept that people may be unwilling or reluctant to report someone missing to the police, with Dave answering, "No, why would they not be reported?"

It seems in the dark figure of 'missing' there are the 'missing missing' and those characterised by 'ungrievable lives' and thus be invisible as missing people. Now from a cultural issues' perspective, there appears to be a realisation that a person is missing to a family but that the family, for a number of different

reasons, may be reluctant to report that person as missing to the authorities. This is a further cause for the creation of invisibility and can only be overcome through improvements in the trust and confidence in the police and social services particularly. From this sub-section, it is suggested that the start of an impetus to adopt a procedural justice approach in the management of missing persons can be sensed.

#### 4.3.15 Summary of Part Two

From the evidence above, the 'dark figure' of missing involves real people who for challenging reasons are shielded from sight by a cloak of invisibility. In summing up, within the dark figure of 'missing' are the 'missing missing' and those characterised by 'ungrievable lives' alongside people who are the victims of slavery and exploitation; all of whom will be invisible as missing people. A further cause of invisibility is a perceived lack of trust and confidence in the police driven by cultural issues within communities which may be overcome through the adoption of a procedural justice approach in the management of missing persons. These themes are compounded by arguments about 'when to call the police?' and the duration families must endure without support from the police again all building towards a growing invisibility for some missing people.

Alongside these factors contributing to a dark figure, were other causes, such as crime in families and criminal families who do not want to attract unnecessary police attention. Lastly, people making 'lifestyle choices' and 'lost contact' cases were quoted as reasons not to report people to the police. 'Lifestyle choices' is a description given to people who move away from their families deliberately and mostly do not regard themselves as missing persons despite a family trying to trace them. Relationship breakdown and starting new lives are often given as reasons to move away. 'Lost contact' cases are where a family has become estranged for whatever reason and at some time later, often several years, one family member or part of a family will try to reconnect with the absent member. Most often the police will not record a missing person but refer this type of case to a voluntary sector organization, such as the Red Cross, the Salvation Army or Missing People, for assistance.

In concluding Part Two, I build on the emergent themes of Part One (in sub-section 4.2.5, p. 102) that can be seen as indicative of promoting or causing

invisibility in policing operations around missing people. New themes from this Part are added and the below table provides a composite listing of the themes building on Table 7 (p. 102). Again, a full summary written as a narrative is provided in Part Five below together with a view on how the evidence and theme has the potential to answer any of the research questions.

- Policing structure and arrangements – policies and procedures – police discretion - all appear to have a direct impact on (in)visibility in *missing* – lack of knowledge of the *missing* phenomenon also contributes to invisibility
- The role of the police – police culture – the dark figure of *missing* - the value of people – trust and confidence in the police – procedural justice – have a very strong influence on the visibility of missing people
- Adherence to process – robotism – use of technology – loss of data - the ‘everydayness’ of *missing* – blasé attitudes – cyclical and repeated nature of police response – perhaps one of the more striking conclusions from the thesis is the impact of process-driven approaches in policework
- Reputational risk – personal risk and organisational risk – assist in the disguise of missing people
- Work-related stress – emotional labour – witness talk – immersion in cases - consequences of policing structures and arrangements as much as operational activity, stress assists in the creation of (in)visibility while emotional labour can assist in promoting visibility
- Spatialities and temporalities – how time and space create opportunities for (in)visibility in *missing*
- Statistics hiding the essence of personhood – revelation of rich picture of *missing* – on balance statistics can be said to be fairly neutral in the creation of (in)visibility
- Certainty in investigations – family attitudes – ‘skeletons in the cupboard’ – reveals that the more the police seek certainty (visibility) the more a family may create invisibility

Table 8: Possible characteristics and potential causes of (in)visibility in missing persons - 2

Having concluded Part Two, the narrative, analysis of responses and the discussion now moves on to Part Three and considers the second element of the investigation cycle: investigate, search and locate.

#### 4.4 Part Three: Investigate, search and locate

##### 4.4.1 Introduction

Having covered ‘the initial missing person report’ in the second section of the analysis, this section covers the second element of the cycle: ‘investigate, search and locate’. This part starts a resume of the risk assessment process in *missing*; discusses the use of categorical information and its effect of pigeon-holing people: treating people in the same way regardless of their individual characteristics; draws attention to the notion of being seen to be doing something and concludes with a section on publicity. This latter section encompasses publicity strategies; consent to publicity and privacy issues; the utility and impact of publicity; the stigmas created by publicity and lastly, the right to be forgotten.

The element of the cycle also includes the conduct of risk assessments which is an integral part of an investigation. Risk assessment processes are perhaps inevitably subjective on access to facts and intelligence surrounding a case, checklists and risk assessment tools, professional judgement: the experience and expertise of the assessor (College of Policing, 2020b) and to a certain degree ‘gut feeling’. Put together, the factors can add to or reduce the invisibility of the missing person producing them, through certainty of information and facts, to be seen or, subtly and inadvertently, disguising or hiding them as will be seen in the sections that follow. The respondents were not asked specific questions about the risk assessment process, but risk assessments were repeatedly referenced during the interviews, so it is worthwhile including a brief discussion about risk assessments in *missing* here.

While much attention has been paid to terminological issues surrounding ‘risk’, ‘harm’, and ‘hazards’ in the operational sphere (see for example, Carson and Bain, 2008) as well as in academia (see, for example, Eales, 2017), Sparrow argues that harm should be preferred ‘for its freshness and for its generality’ (2008, p. 11). Sparrow goes on to suggest that one word is needed to represent or encompass the broadest set of things regarded as being bad in some way and *harm* ‘seems less spoilt by particular usage and less monopolized by specific disciplines’ (2008, p. 11). In helping to explain his harm reduction and control theory, Sparrow adopts the analogy of a knot, not unlike a Gordian Knot,

which represents ‘the bad’ being considered. It can only be untied by an experienced and skilled person who understands its structure and context, although other methods have been used to unravel the knot as presented below.



Figure 9: ‘Alexander cutting the Gordian Knot’, Fischetti, 1732-1792

In the field of missing persons, risk assessments are commonplace in both policing and social care and they determine the immediacy of action required, the style of action and the numbers of players involved in the action.

#### 4.4.2 The risk assessment process in missing

Following on from the reporting and recording of a missing person, police forces will risk assess each case and allocate a risk category based on risks to the person missing and their vulnerabilities. The risk category will then drive policing activities and the allocation of resources, with the highest risk cases attracting the greatest attention.

Most police forces have overcome terminological issues and have adopted the THRIVE<sup>13</sup> and THRIVE+<sup>14</sup> models (or derivatives thereof, see for example,

<sup>13</sup> The THRIVE model requires the consideration of Threat, harm, risk, investigation, vulnerability and engagement.

<sup>14</sup> The THRIVE+ model contains the two additional considerations of prevention and intervention.

HMIC, 2014c and College of Policing, 2016) linked to the National Decision-Making Model and Risk Principles (College of Policing, 2014 and 2018 respectively). This is not an exact scientific process as it often involves subjective decisions being made although consultation on new risk in vulnerability guidelines is underway (College of Policing, 2020b).

In training sessions with police officers, it is rare to get consensus on which risk category should apply to any particular case. In most police forces, a set of risk questions is asked of the reporting person to start off the risk assessment process, but there is no consistent process applied across police forces and question sets vary considerably (Smith and Shalev Greene, 2014).

Consideration is being given to imposing a single risk assessment question set using psychological principles and memory cues to achieve better information recall and acquisition for the risk assessment process than is currently achieved (Gabbert, 2019 and Giles, 2020). While currently under review, risk categories currently range, on a continuum, from 'no apparent risk' to 'low risk' and through 'medium risk' to 'high risk' (College of Policing, 2017). Inevitably, other categories, such as 'standard risk' and 'very high risk' have emerged (see, for example, Doyle, 2020) and it is often difficult to separate the high end of one category from the low end of the next.

There is considerable variation in the interpretation of the guidance and in the adoption of local policies and practices which, while based on the APP, provide for a 'postcode lottery' of differing practice across the UK's police forces. During 2019, this inconsistency and lack of coherence was challenged, and research conducted through the National Police Chiefs' Council to enable a review of the APP. It emerged that more police effort was made in no apparent risk cases than in low risk cases, despite low risk being higher of the risk continuum than no apparent risk. Many police forces had decided to narrow the definition of a missing person from the wide, catch-all definition stated in the APP (National Police Chiefs' Council, 2019). A proportion of police forces adopted, over time, a harm or risk-based definition, partly as a response to the ever-increasing reporting of missing persons to the police (an increase of 13% on the 2015/16 figures and an increase of 30% on the 2013/14 figures reported in the 2016/17 missing persons' data report, [National Crime Agency, 2019]). The College of Policing is expected to revise both the definition of a missing person and the

risk categories in an unusual example of practice dictating policy rather than policy establishing practice.

In this part of the research topic guide, two groups of questions were posed to the respondents. The first set concentrated on the use of 'categorical information' in order to gain an understanding of how this type of material is used in the formulation of risk assessments and in search design and parameter setting (in the search for a missing person). The second group of questions concerned (in)visibility in the media. Not all the questions were asked of all the respondents.

An explanation of categorical information was provided to the interviewees; and, is information contained in actuarial or behavioural data sets such as 'Understanding, Planning and Responding' (Gibb and Woolnough, 2007), known colloquially as 'The Grampian study' and 'iFind' (Eales, 2016).

#### 4.4.3 The use of categorical information

Using categorisation in a broad sense, Edkins (2011) draws attention to the reductionist and objectivising influences created by the authorities in their treatment of the missing. As already mentioned, a missing person is reduced to a police computer record and becomes an object of an investigation: 'the who can disappear into the what' (p. 13). It is not just the missing who are categorised, the use of the categories 'migrant' and 'refugee' to differentiate between the experiences of those on the move and the legitimacy or otherwise of their claims to international protection is highlighted by Crawley and Skleparis (2018). They aim to challenge what Apostolova (2015) has described as a form of 'categorical fetishism' which, despite significant academic critique, 'continues to treat the categories 'refugee' and 'migrant' as if they simply exist, out there, as empty vessels into which people can be placed in some neutral ordering process like a small child putting bricks into a series of coloured buckets' (Crawley and Skleparis, 2018, p. 49).

In some form of apparent default setting, bureaucracies require categorisation; it is only when significant numbers in any category reach a peak that notice is taken and action may then follow to set up new teams, new procedures and so on to deal with any situation arising from the accumulation of data about or

within any category. Only when action to deal with the collective is established can time and energy be spent on the individual.

Edkins' objection to categorisation is compounded by the sub-categorisation of missing which occurs during the risk assessment process and is used for investigative purposes generally and particularly for search. It can be seen that adoption of categories used in both the search guidance documents can be seen as pigeon-holing people and assumptions may flow from the categorisation process. Using Edkins' term, the 'person-as-such' is replaced by a label or a category: they are 'suicidal', 'depressed', have Alzheimer's and so on. The person is then regarded as the same as others fitting the same description and actions in the investigation revolve around the category and not the person, a point made by Parr and Fyfe (2012). This has the potential to be unhelpful and may create a sense of invisibility.

On the other hand, we experience the world by creating categories and making distinctions between them. Langer (2014), writing on 'mindfulness', cautions that the careless use of categories can lead to 'mindlessness' but asserts that only by using categories 'do we make a picture of the world, and of ourselves. Without categories the world might seem to escape us' (p. 13). Langer borrows the Buddhist expression, 'the Lord of speech' to describe this habit,

'We adopt sets of categories which serve as ways of managing phenomena. The most fully developed products of this tendency are ideologies, the systems of ideas that rationalize, justify and sanctify our lives. Nationalism, communism, existentialism ... all provide us with identities, rules of action, and interpretation of how and why things happen as they do' (Trungpa (1973) cited in Langer, 2014, p. 13).

Knowing that categories help make sense of the world, they can also make sense of the 'missing'. Categorising missing people helps to drive the allocation of resources and enables proportionate searches to be conducted. If 500 people in a particular category or typology have all been found within two kilometres of their homes and have travelled on foot, then from an actuarial data and behavioural perspective it makes sense to search a two kilometre radius around the home of a missing person who fits the category before doing other search tasks. The data sets in the two search guides, *supra*, provide exactly this type of information based on categorical information.



Caution needs to be applied however, regarding the use of categories. Already discussed is the likelihood that invisibility may be created by the reduction of a person's identity and being placed into a category such as 'dementia' or 'Asperger's'; a person so described may then always be labelled as 'a missing person with dementia' or 'a missing person with Asperger's', when the condition may not be relevant to the missing episode. The use of these types of generalisations may produce a policing response not wholly suited to the case. I am suggesting that investigating and search officers should always be critical in applying categories to missing persons, seeking information from families and carers to create a fuller understanding of the individual than the category alone allows.

The interview questions are set out fully in the Interview Topic Guide in Appendix C and are summarised here for ease of reference. The respondents were asked if they made use of categorical information, and if so, how? They were asked about the helpfulness or otherwise of using categories to describe missing people and the effect of categorisation in terms of revealing or disguising a person.

#### 4.4.4 Responses to the use of categorical information

The interviews elicited a variety of responses ranging from usage of the datasets providing a guide to search activity; assertions that some forces mandated the use of the data sets; the data sets themselves providing an evidence base for search formulation; through attempting to make the person fit into a category; and, on to the uniqueness of individual cases and a resistance to make use of categories.

Bryan, an established and experienced PolSA, talked through the determinants (causes) of missing and building hypothesis trees. Typically used in major crime operations when various hypotheses about what has happened to a missing person are compared and contrasted. A hypothesis tree usually takes a problem statement, in the form of a question such as, 'what has happened to the missing person, Bibi Saville?' and then comprehensively disaggregates potential solutions, which may include deliberately missing, suicide, third party involvement, and so on (see, for example, Stratechi, 2019). He discussed the categorisation of missing persons using data sets, set out his confidence when

using iFind, and pigeon-holing people balanced by a need to understand a person through the acquisition of knowledge about the person and the local area in which they are missing,

“So, I’d **put a hypothesis together**, I’d put in place a number of actions, **to prove or disprove each hypothesis** and then I would look at, most recently, the iFind data to, **yes to categorise** that particular person. But, yes, I think it is **necessary, in terms of aligning resources to the investigation**, to have that little **bit of a pigeon-holing**. It’s very fluid but I find that ... having the category there ... we should be guided by them, and use them as **a good starter for ten**, it’s **not the be all and end all resource**, local knowledge comes into it, knowledge of the person comes into it, the knowledge of the family comes into it.”  
[Bryan]

The notion of pigeon-holing people and classifying people into any number of categories emerged in other conversations too, such as those with Alan Rhees-Cooper, staff officer to the National Police Chiefs’ Council lead for missing persons (at the time of writing, ACC Catherine Hankinson, West Yorkshire Police). Alan Rhees-Cooper commented when discussing police definitions of missing and risk categories, “we like to pigeon-hole people into categories” and “classifying children as truant, as much as high [risk] or no apparent risk is part of the problem” and perhaps typical of the police response (Rhees-Cooper, 2019).

Bryan’s ideas around ‘a starter for ten’ were supported by Jack. Jack, a district commander and critical incident manager felt it was ‘foolish to disregard’ an evidential base for setting search parameters but again stressed the guiding quality of categorical data,

“... it’s generally used as a guide, so, your initial search parameters are based on the information you have available which is obviously some research which is evidential. ... So, it would be **a bit foolish to disregard it** ... it’s used as **a guide and a tool** for making my job a lot easier to do.” [Jack]

Two other respondents, Chas and Dave, both established PoISAs, resisted the use of categorical generalisations,

“My job is to go, well, hold on a minute, what do we actually know, we can’t, **we can’t survive just using a generalisation.**” [Chas]

While Dave commented that the Police National Search Centre (part of the College of Policing and the licensing authority for police search officers [professional accreditation]) had mandated the use of the Grampian work and iFind, he understood the problems with categorising missing people,

“We’re pretty much **mandated by the National Centre** to use those and if we don’t use those we have to justify why.” [Dave]

He quoted cases where a person would be a mixture or blend of more than one category although at the same time seemed to suggest that people may be made to fit into categories,

“**We try and make it fit** and if it doesn’t fit in a nice little hole then we, I will try and work out what that bit of information is, will it affect their mental health, will it affect their physical capability?” [Dave]

Dave did recognise the guiding quality of the data sets, stating that they were immensely helpful but like Bryan, Dave wanted to understand the missing person as much as possible, thus creating visibility.

Another respondent in this section, Eric, a seasoned professional in the field of missing persons and now a safeguarding lead pointed to the use of categorical information as a mechanism to reduce reputational risk so as to protect the organisation, while at the same time building the public’s trust and confidence in policing. He gave one of the best quotes of all the interviews using metaphor to describe his view on the use of categorical data,

“It’s a bit like **a lamp post to a drunk, it provides illumination** but not to be totally lent against or relied upon<sup>15</sup>.” [Eric]

Eric’s quote summarises other responses to this question set in that the use of categorical data provides a guide to activity but that it is limited. Personal experience of cases, overall expertise and training play an equal part in understanding what may have happened to a missing person. The second quote here from Eric sets out his views on the value of categorising a person from an organisational perspective,

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<sup>15</sup> The source of this colourful simile is uncertain. It is an adaptation of A E Housman’s saying written in 1903. Housman was unhappy with the poor quality of the scholarship of some of his colleagues. He employed an analogy that compared inept critics with drunkards beneath lampposts. It is also credited to Mark Twain and used by Andrew Lang about statistics and later accredited to Churchill (<https://quoteinvestigator.com/2014/01/15/stats-drunk/>).

“Well, **categorising somebody [is] likely to lead to a better chance of recovering them quicker**, safer ... the ability to actually **protect the organisational reputation** ... so increased trust and confidence in the police [is] quite substantial.” [Eric]

Frederick, a middle manager in policing involved in partnership work, talked through his views on the use of categorical information pointing to the evidence base created by the ‘Grampian Study’ and by iFind. He was a firm supporter of evidence-based (evidence-informed) policing and as such was always seeking to understand what evidence was available in any particular policing activity (particularly as he had just started a new partnership manager role). Frederick echoed comments made by other informants in the study around reasons to categorise missing people, primarily as a starting point in an investigation,

“It also gives you **a starting point to start to move forward** on a more evidence base rather than an anecdotal, **feeling kind of approach which can also be biased** and probably has more biases as well.” [Frederick]

In this same quote Frederick introduces the idea that a ‘gut feeling’ response to a case carries with it the possibility of bias, particularly ‘unconscious bias’ (see, for example, University of California, undated). Preferring an evidence-based approach, he felt that bias could be avoided using categorical data. He went on to talk about a tendency in policing to be risk averse. Risk aversion may lead to completing too many tasks or actions in any one incident or, conversely, failing to complete task and actions. He stressed that the proper use of data and an evidence base could support a proportionate response to a missing person’s case which avoided over- and under-reaction to a missing person’s episode,

“The difficulty about having that broad data is that with there being **a fear factor** ... if **we don’t do something right and we get criticised**, is that there is a real tendency ... **both to under react and overreact** ... the sensible, careful use of data can help **reduce that imbalance, that disproportionality**.” [Frederick]

In a similar way to Eric, Frederick was keen to use data and evidence to avoid internal criticism and criticism by way of complaints from the public which, as already pointed out, has the corollary of increasing trust and confidence in policing. In both Eric and Frederick’s responses, there is a feeling that data can be used not only to promote a sense of visibility but also to increase factors leading to invisibility.

While on the matter of reputation, the number of complaints regarding the police handling of missing persons' cases is high. It should be highlighted that very few of the 'Learning the Lessons' bulletins from the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) have not contained an article describing a missing episode that generated a complaint. The fact that so many complaints emanate from missing persons' investigations led the IOPC to publish Issue 36, dedicated to articles around the quality and timeliness missing persons' police work (Independent Office for Police Conduct, 2019). Complaints should be viewed as a good thing as they provide opportunities for improvement and organisational learning; in this way complaints lead to the visibility of a missing person as all the action and debate in the investigation can be scrutinised. The individual person may have been less visible during a potentially flawed investigation, but they reclaim their visibility as the complaint is resolved.

Lastly, two of the women officers interviewed gave a different and more nuanced view of the use of categorical data. Heidi particularly said that it was essential to understand people as well as recognising the part that categorisation plays in a missing person investigation,

"It's not about having a child's toy box and trying to put the triangle in the square hole. **It's trying to find the right match.** I think that **categorisation is really important** and do[es] play a part in policing but I think it goes back to us knowing, collectively, that person." [Heidi]

Eyda made similar comments and said she would seek to understand the uniqueness of cases,

"Yep, it really depends on each case, you know, **each case is so unique and individual.**" [Eyda]

Note that I am not implying any gender analysis here but rather to say that women officers may take a different approach to missing episodes than their male counterparts. This does raise the interesting question of why this might be the case? The participants were not asked question to develop answers in this area and there was nothing in the responses to suggest reasons why this may be the case. Therefore, I have not attempted to understand how or why women police officers and staff members may take an alternative view of missing episodes and their resolution in comparison to male officers and staff members

although an analysis of the impact of police culture in missing persons is explored in Chapter Five.

Overall, in this section it can be seen that the respondents had a range of views. Most acknowledged the utility of categorical data, most realised the data's limitations and stated that data should only be used as a guide to activity. The respondents in general preferred the use of data to be balanced by as intimate a knowledge of the missing person (c/f victimology) and the wider family and circumstances as possible. Two of the interviewees referred to the use of data for the minimisation of reputational risk and its corollary, for the building of trust and confidence in policing missing persons episodes.

It is possible to view categories in the same way as statistics in that they appear to have a dual quality of both hiding individual people and enabling visibility. To explain some more, having categories in which to place missing people promotes the processing and analysing of data and information in relation to the operation of the category. This might be described as de-coding or transcoding of data which then creates opportunities for investment in and awareness of the individuals that are contained within the category. The recreation of visibility for individual people can then take place in a type of symbiotic action where the second half of the action is dependent on the first half.

Some of the respondents, for example Frederick, pointed to over-reacting and under reacting to circumstances in the missing episode, drawing attention to 'the need to be seen doing something'. Often in police 'missing' investigations, there is family, management and political pressure to achieve results at pace. Very frequently media pressure is added implying that an investigation may not be resourced effectively or that the speed of the investigation could be improved. The next section discusses, in brief, 'the need to be seen to be doing something' which touches on the visibility of the search process.

#### 4.4.5 Being seen to be doing something

'Being seen to be doing something' often appears as a reputational necessity both for an individual officer, and usually a more senior than less senior one, and for the organisation. It is a public demonstration of police action, usually revolving around 'the search' element of an investigation, for a family and a community to see and represents a form of assurance that the police force is

doing all it can to find a missing person as quickly as possible. But the visibility of the search process to different audiences, for example family, friends, and a local community, may become the key driver of activity rather than any sense of its efficacy in the search process, as Chas explains,

“Quite often you will get senior officers say **I want to make it look as though we are doing something**, and I’ll say, I know what you want to do is to go and find them as though you’re doing something **but that is a waste of resources**, helicopters is the biggest one. Can we get the helicopter up? But we not going to find him with a helicopter. But **the family want us to be seen to be doing something**, and I know, but really, **that’s not a good use of resources and it’s wasteful and it sends out the wrong signal**, I think, and **it’s possible to do meaningless enquiries for the sake of meaningless enquiries**.” [Chas]

“**It’s much easier for an officer to say, yes, just do it, let’s get the dogs out, let’s get the helicopter up** because it’s a resource, we can call on them even though they are called from pillar to post. **It is far harder for a senior officer to say I considered it but have decided not to**, because the PolSA said, said this, you know, sometimes **it’s a bit like Pavlov’s dog**, really. **We send the balloon up just for the sake of sending the balloon up**.” [Chas]

It takes a strong-willed lead officer to resist the use of available resources when faced with pressure from family often in the glare of media scrutiny when the search advisor points to the waste of resources and of time. On many occasions, it is easier just to deploy un-needed resources almost as a sop (a thing of no great value given or done as a concession to appease someone whose main concerns or demands are not being met) to a family anxious to get as much done in the search for their missing loved one as possible.

My interpretation here is that the search becomes the most visible feature with the reality of the missing situation and the police reputational logics remaining invisible. The individual missing person is not revealed through the over-application of unwarranted police and volunteer search resources.

The discussion and analysis now move onto the responses to the questions relating to publicity as an investigative strategy. It will be seen that publicity as an element of an investigation might have the same quality as the unnecessary deployment of police resources, as another example of ‘being seen to be doing something’.

#### 4.4.6 Publicity and the media

The nature of missing person appeals has changed considerably since public adoption of the world-wide web. Initially tactics centred on ‘word-of-mouth’ and local initiatives which were confined to the communities in which the individual lived or were last seen. Lampinen *et al.* (2009) cover the ground well and give an example of how information-distribution channels have evolved in recent decades can be seen in the case of Etan Patz, a young boy kidnapped in America in 1984.



Figure 10: Photograph of Etan Patz ([https://caveviews.blogs.com/cave\\_news/2012/04/etan-patz-picture-was-one-of-first-on-a-milk-carton.html](https://caveviews.blogs.com/cave_news/2012/04/etan-patz-picture-was-one-of-first-on-a-milk-carton.html))

Patz was amongst the first of the missing children to appear on milk cartons nationwide in the United States of America, as part of a campaign run by the National Child Safety Council (NCSC). The NCSC hypothesized that as milk cartoons were an integral part of the American family breakfast, adverts on the cartoons would be likely reach a large percentage of the population (2009, pp. 407-408) and be an extraordinary kind of visibility. At the time the United States had no system for tracking missing children across large geographical areas and it was hoped that publishing photographs on cartons would bring cases to the attention of the public. The modern internet was not yet fully established or widely available at this time and daily news outlets rarely focused their attention on missing person's appeals. The milk carton appeals can be viewed as analogue versions of ‘push notifications’ that we now receive on our smart ‘phones and at the time were considered as the most effective way of distributing information about a missing person to a large number of people across a wide geographical area (‘Heidi’, 2019).



Police forces have used the popularity of social media to enhance missing person investigations, drawing upon the behaviour of people across digital platforms to generate interest and share content instantaneously. Missing person appeals are a common feature of globally reported events, most notably in cases of large-scale disasters or man-made atrocities such as the Indian Ocean Tsunami and 9/11 terrorist attack (Edkins, 2011). With the rich source of information available on social media platforms over the years they have played a significant and innovative role in the police response to missing person cases (Holmes, 2016). Police have continued to engage in a wide range of publicity mechanisms including social media despite there being a paucity of research evidence into the effectiveness of the appeals (Drivsholm *et al.*, 2017). There is now much research being conducted into the effectiveness of Twitter as a missing persons' publicity mechanism at the Universities of Manchester (Solymosi, 2019, quantitative research study on the reach of Twitter appeals in one police force highlighting that black missing people are notably less retweetable than white missing people), Huddersfield (Hunt, 2019, do 'branded' appeals carry more weight and have more impact?) and Portsmouth (Juncu and Glorney, engagement with Twitter appeals and how much and why appeals are re-tweeted?) and academic publications are awaited.

While media publicity can be a positive tool used to help locate a missing individual, appeals can also be exploited by the media and the community in order to create a moral panic (Cohen, 2011). Although Cohen's work is based on the experience of the sixties: the demise of the 'teddy boy' and their inherent violent culture only to be replaced by the violence and disorder of the 'mods and rockers', it is updated after forty years. He argues that it is the same public and media discourse that provides the raw evidence of moral panics which can be seen 'as short term reactions to the immediate ('the current moral panic about paedophiles') and long-term general reflections on the 'state-of-our-times' ... Calling something a 'moral panic' does not imply that this something does not exist or happened at all and that reaction is based on fantasy, hysteria, delusion and illusion or being duped by the powerful' (2011, p. vii). According to Cohen the media can produce a moral panic drama by 'constructing the agenda': selecting those socially problematic events which are considered newsworthy; 'transmitting the images' and claims by focusing on or dumbing down the

rhetoric of moral panics; and 'breaking the silence' by making the claim. More frequently now than in the sixties, the media are in the claims-making business themselves (2011, p. xxviii).

In his ethnographic study of murder investigations, Innes (2003) draws attention to the value of co-operating with journalists. This co-operation allows the police to access information from members of the public while the journalists are interested because murder stories fulfil 'the institutionally maintained criterion of what is 'newsworthy' and what the public is interested in' (Innes, 2003, p. 152). There is a sense of compromise that Innes argues is intrinsic in police-media relations: the police understand what makes a story attractive to journalists and there is an awareness that the police may have to exploit parts of an incident or episode and those connected to it, if they are to realise the media's effectiveness in assisting with an investigation (p. 153).

Over the last two decades, the discourse of harm has been evolving with attention being drawn, not to the harm caused by crime to individuals or organisations written about by Sparrow (2011), but to the determinants of a wider harm, described as 'social harm' (see Hillyard *et al.*, 2004 and Pemberton, 2016). The idea of social harm can also be seen in the later writing by Innes on Signal Crimes: crimes and episodes which are especially influential in shaping our view of the world, how we think or feel about it, and how we act in respect of sense of security, Innes (2014) shows that we pay attention to these types of crimes and incidents because of their ability to illuminate risks and threats acting across social space. Signal crimes 'organise social reactions, functioning like lightning rods, channelling public attention ... towards some issues and away from others' (2014, preface). Some missing persons cases serve this function, for example, the disappearance of three-year-old Madeleine McCann from her holiday home in Praia da Luz, Portugal while her parents enjoyed an evening out. The case stole public attention at the time in 2007 and continues to do so now.

Another consideration is the type or style of story that 'has legs' in the media, in other words the story created has the capacity to run across several news bulletins or editions reporting on actual events as well as providing a back story accompanied by comment and analysis. I have already indicated the presence

of the 'missing white women syndrome' (in Part One, sub-section on 'Undeserving missing and ungrievable lives') and still this syndrome persists in media reporting of the missing with increased visibility of some groups of population; young, white, blond, blue-eyed girls in particular enjoy high visibility (Campbell, 2019).

Following on from Cohen's work it may be seen that both media outlets and the wider public can misrepresent the identity of an individual, encourage unnecessary speculation and invite negative comments which can be viewed by the missing person and their family. This misrepresentation can be seen to have a detrimental impact on the person missing and make the experience of 'returning' more challenging (Beadle, 2017 and Missing People, 2018). Drivsholm *et al.* (2017) argue that research does exist which suggests that appeals do not always have a positive impact on the investigation and advise that the dissemination of images may have a negative impact on a missing person's wellbeing.

Information posted online has an enduring quality and is likely to remain available for years. It becomes a person's digital identity which is then present for third parties to research. An individual's digital footprint and reputation is available to search by prospective employers that may refuse to recruit a person who has previously listed as missing (CareerBuilder, 2015). Individuals can request for information to be removed from search engines (see for example, Google's 'EU privacy removal policy', undated), although this is a lengthy, and not always successful, process and does not remove or lessen the responsibility of the police to protect cyber identities.

Through the careful management and selective control of media appeals for missing persons, the police can effectively balance efforts to locate the individual with the protection of digital footprints and reputations, to minimise both the short-term and long-term impacts ('Heidi', 2019).

My own view on publicity, following Lampinen *et al.* (2008 and 2009) is that it works in three ways. Firstly, using prospective person memory, a person sees publicity of a missing child and then with the image of the child in their mind, looks for the child where they are expected to be. Secondly, using retrospective person memory, a person sees a number of children in a park, returns home

and then sees on social media, the publicity indicating that one of the children seen is a missing child (2009, pp. 408-409). Lastly, a person knows a number of people and, on seeing publicity to show that one of them is missing, recalls that they last saw them since the person was reported as missing or knows of the person's whereabouts. Evidence suggests that the average person's prospective and retrospective memories are very poor (see for example, Lampinen and Moore, 2019) and sightings are likely to be very limited.

The second set of questions in the 'investigate, search and locate' element of the investigative cycle concerned (in)visibility in the media. The questions sought the respondents' understanding of the impact of media and publicity in missing episodes and general public reporting of missing people. Again, not all respondents were asked all the questions (see Chapter Three - Methodology).

The discussion raised by the respondents was anchored around four key areas: publicity strategies; consent issues and the welfare and privacy of the missing person; the perceived usefulness and impact of publicity; and, issues surrounding the 'right to be forgotten'. These areas are not mutually exclusive and overlaps between them are necessary, particularly between privacy of a missing person and the impact of publicity, and privacy and the right to be forgotten. I have separated them into these four areas in the order shown from a chronological point of view. The issues in the four areas emerge during an investigation in the order presented, so this appeared a useful order in which to tackle to analysis. The next section will provide an assessment and analysis of the respondents' views in the same order. Individual conclusions are not given at the end of each sub-section and a summary and conclusion of the publicity section is presented along with an overall summary and conclusion at the end of Part Two.

#### 4.4.7 Publicity strategies

Most of the informants reported little in the way of written corporate strategies on the use of publicity in missing persons' cases. Many of the individual police forces represented in the interviews had the generic use of publicity written into standard operating procedures (SOPs) or local protocol documents. The procedures list, *inter alia*, authorities necessary (usually at sergeant or inspector level) to provide publicity in any particular case along with the consents required

from family or care givers, as Eyda (a constable), Keith and Bryan (both inspectors) explain. Consent from families and care givers is covered in greater depth in the next section.

“It’s something that, as an initial responder, you have to get **authority from the next-of-kin** in order to be able to go public in the media for a missing’s report. I personally would only do it as a matter of course, myself, **if I felt there was an urgent need for it**, if it needed to be out there right this second otherwise there’s are the usual protocols to go through to highlight someone to go out on social media as missing and **I normally do just the usual steps** which I know think falls to the missing persons’ team to actually put something out on social media as missing.” [Eyda]

“**It’s my responsibility** to, first of all if I’m doing the response inspector role **to consider** [publicity] **as an option** and certainly, as part of my strategy, a couple of things on there is **to ensure that there is support the family and friends and at an early stage to get authority for publicity**, for sharing information and photographs about that person. ... [publicity is] certainly considered in my strategy.” [Keith]

“I think **it’s part of the policy**, that there is a publicity strategy. ... There’s always prompts by the control room and by the patrol inspector level to **consider media at different points** to make sure that ... the missing person **is circulated as far and as wide as necessary** in the circumstances really.” [Bryan]

Keith also felt that the longer the duration of a case promoted the need for publicity,

“I think it’s something that, when somebody is missing **for a longer period of time, the media publicity becomes more prevalent and more of a consideration going forward.**” [Keith]

Two respondents, Chas (a PoLSA) and Frederick (a chief inspector), referred to the consideration around publicity being conducted on risk assessment basis and a case-by-case basis respectively, perhaps indicating some care by the officers in the case. Chas, as well, pointing to the need for publicity in longer term cases, and Frederick asking the question, ‘will it help?’,

“Our **high-risk cases are pretty much always publicised**, medium risks, err, occasionally, certainly **kids in care homes aren’t because we don’t have permission to publicise** ... The main ones are the high-risk and occasionally, **the longer term, medium-risk ones** where we think the public are going to be able to assist.” [Chas]

**“It’s not a tick box, it’s every case on its own merits** and in relation to that particular case but it is based on evidence that we know, as you said before, will this help these sorts of cases? **Will it help** these sorts of cases?” [Frederick]

But conversely, Frederick also pointed to the crude use of publicity, untargeted publicity which despite its widespread nature still may not reach the right audience for the case,

**“The way we use it here is a little bit crude** and it can be **quite untargeted, quite broad** and often you want quite **specific communications and publicity** may be to **certain groups, certain locations** and it’s hard to tap into those areas with something that is bespoke to the investigation and not the broader channels that the police normally use.” [Frederick]

At the same time, he went on to report that police force media teams (central, corporate communications teams) were reluctant to use publicity in missing persons’ cases perhaps on the basis that any publicity could not be targeted to reach groups of people who may have knowledge of the person missing or their whereabouts,

“And, of course, we are guided by our communications department which generally, often **turns down or advises against the use of publicity on the grounds that if we use it too often it becomes a little bit pointless and undermines itself**. The very volume of cases, you could use publicity on would just, if you did use it, would stop news outlets taking up other tools. **You’ve got to be selective.**” [Frederick]

Keith took a slightly different view arguing that publicity was easy to achieve using social media, broadcast locally using Twitter and Facebook and therefore outside of the control of a central communications team. Having argued that achieving publicity in cases was easy, he also commented that he was unsure of any evidence that publicity using social media or other media was effective, a point which will be picked up later in this section.

#### 4.4.8 Consent, welfare and privacy issues

Most of the respondents talked through the balance to be achieved in providing publicity. This is the balance between safeguarding a missing person as quickly as possible and the privacy of the missing person, a balance made more difficult to find by the wishes of a family. In most cases, the consent of the family is needed before publicity is given to a missing person’s case. For children in

care, the authority of the children's home or foster carer (or nominated social worker) is required prior to publicity being launched. A missing child who is a ward of court may not be given publicity without the court's express permission. The respondents understood the need for consent from families and from care-givers, but nearly all of them knew ways to overcome any lack of consent by relying on the assessed or perceived risk to the missing person and, usually, the duration of the enquiry (that is, the longer the enquiry had been running, the greater need to engage in a publicity campaign). The following quotes from Chas highlight both issues,

"If they are in any sort of care home or social services setting, the **social workers refuse to give consent** for their pictures to be shared." [Chas]

"**High-risk, yes, because they are classed as high risk we can get around that and don't need the permission** from the family or the social services, in loco parentis, just to publicise it, but not all the looked after children will be classed as high risk, in fact, very few of them are." [Chas]

Dave, Bryan and Eric were also keen to address the over-riding of consent but also that, in Eric's view, very few families do not consent to publicity. While the respondents were not asked about the style of approach police officers used when asking families for consent or whether they used persuasive language around the claimed values of publicity, it is apparent from some of the answers given that some police officers could be very persuasive to get their messages heard by families, as the quotes below show,

"In cases where it's denied, I know it's **depending on the vulnerability of the person**, the **SIO will then make a decision** and say no, **we are going to have to go to the press**, and they will **override the next of kin's wishes** because it's more likely, it's massively going to help our chances of finding the person." [Dave]

"If we believe that publicity will be useful and will assist us with any sightings or with any information to find the missing person then **we will certainly use media**. ... **the welfare of the person overrides any privacy** ... but we will always seek to get co-operation from the next-of-kin first." [Bryan]

"And we will form our press strategy in terms of anybody else then if we have consent, then we will, if we don't have consent, that's depending on the risk level and how long they've been missing for and then make an assessment on whether the press release is going to be done, we **will over-ride the lack of consent**, we will seek to over-ride that. I've dealt with very few cases where there wasn't consent. **They nearly always consent**." [Eric]

“I guess really it would be down to, if I think, if I think that by publicising somebody, I’m sorry putting somebody out in the media is going to lead them being located more quickly, then I would have a **conversation with the family around why they were reluctant to put that person in the press** or put that person on social media, because generally there is a reason, there is a concern expressed by the family. I would want to have that conversation with them first and I guess really that, if I wasn’t satisfied with their answer, and **at the end of the day my job is to, you know, locate that person, protect life and limb**, I would do it if it was the right thing to do. Umm, **it might be a bit controversial, but you do what you need to do to locate somebody and make sure they’re safe ...**” [Keith]

Keith did then go on to clarify his answer realising, perhaps, that the process-driven nature of police investigations tended to ignore the balance between consent, safeguarding concerns and the privacy of a family or of a missing person,

“I think generally speaking, and speaking completely honestly, **I haven’t given it too much thought in the past**, my thinking has **always been around locating them.**” [Keith]

In addition, Heidi talked through the need for a risk assessment ahead of any decision to use publicity in missing persons’ cases. In the ‘Risk assessment’ sub-section (in Part Two, *supra*), it was seen that a risk assessment features early in an investigation into a missing person. It allows for a person to be categorised in terms of risk which in turn helps the police to organise resources and enquiries. In brief, the higher the risk, the more that is done. Risk assessment should also feature in police considerations around the provision of publicity in any particular case. The assessment should document both the prospective benefits and probable negative consequences of a media appeal together with a rationale that any media appeals work in the best interests of a missing individual. Controlling the media coverage and especially protecting the digital imprint of those that are reported as missing to the police would contribute to a more positive return to family life, education and work life (‘Heidi’, 2019).

#### 4.4.9 Utility and impact

It seems clear that no assessment was made of the values of publicity by the respondents, most of whom believed that providing publicity was an integral



part of an investigation in the belief that publicity campaigns were successful in eliciting tips and clues about a person's whereabouts from an interested public but there is little academic research evidence on the utility of publicity campaigns. Dave makes an interesting point, too, about embarrassment caused to a family by a missing episode,

"It's normally, it's where I find that there's **denied permission** to go for a press release is when there's some form of **embarrassment for the family**. It tends to be if the husband has stormed off threatening to commit suicide, the wife won't want to publicise it, because it's possibly not a genuine suicide attempt and **she doesn't want the embarrassment of the neighbours knowing** that her husband has stormed off threatening to commit suicide and have the police out there looking for him." [Dave]

Only two of the respondents (Chas and Eyda) did not address the issue of balance. All six others (Jack was not asked about publicity), discussed the matter, talking through the missing person's safeguarding or welfare being more important than their privacy so that privacy would take second place to the urgent need for publicity,

"So, for somebody who wants to be away, **if it's a lifestyle choice, it's not going to be in their best interests**, some say they got **a right to be left alone**. But for **a family** who is trying to find their loved ones, **it's in their best interests**, so you've got to, **there's a fine balance** to be struck. It's not always in the best interests and **each case should be treated on its own merits**." [Eric]

"Yes, and anyone can go missing, ... you could enter a crisis tonight and think, oh gosh, that's too much for me and you could go off. **You are perfectly functioning**, you have an important role, but **that one moment of crisis, you are now on social media, on Google for life**, as Joe Apps has gone missing after a meltdown and that will follow you for **the rest of your life**. Now fine if you're a 78-year-old lady with dementia who doesn't really care about social media. But if you're a 15-year-old kid, it will follow you **for the rest of your life** and I think we have a duty, as much as anyone, **to protect the cyber-identity** of our most vulnerable and, also, does that leave them **open to harm**? One would argue that it does, so 95-year-old Beryl that goes missing from Manchester or last seen from a small village in Norfolk, who's to say that people are not watching here and thinking **she's the one we're going to scam next because she's got dementia**?" [Heidi]

"I would because it's, with **social media**, you know, this is **out there basically forever** that they've gone missing and especially if they've gone missing on their

own volition, they were of sound mind and **we are publicising the fact that they have gone missing**. I think sometimes ... **we don't consider the benefits of publicising against the, the possible negatives sometimes.**" [Chas]

In the same way, a family's lack of consent or refusal to give consent for publicity could be over-ridden by concerns over safeguarding and welfare. Frederick made the point that publicity would only be used if the benefits of publicity were assessed as outweighing the disadvantages, a point reinforced by Eyda demonstrating proportionate decision-making in the process,

"It's always sought first but there will be **occasions when family or relatives object** to publicity in relation to their case and **it's the right thing to do when we've got the power to do that**. And we **check that doing it will always outweigh the risks of not doing it.**" [Frederick]

"**I think it's a fine line at the moment**. I think there is always that risk that we can put it out there so much that **people just become quite blasé about it especially with, you know, younger regular missing people** you know these faces have popped up every couple of days with new posts about them being missing again so there is a fine line, however, I think that it's probably proportionate because these people do have access to the Internet and social media, mobile phones and **I just think that maybe that's a way of trying to reach out to them.**" [Eyda]

Heidi indicated considerations around the amount of personal details released to the public in any publicity campaign with a view to minimising the exposure of the missing person while at the same time ensuring sufficient information was available for the public to be engaged in the case,

"I have written a paper to my senior officers about **actually how effective is social media** because **I'm not sure it is as effective as one would say it is** and I think it **should not be a default position**. So, we should not be going okay, we've got a high-risk missing child let's do a media appeal immediately. I think, as the police, we have a **professional responsibility** as much as any other agency **to protect** that young person's or that adult's **identity and the cyber footprint** that we leave with that. So, understanding that there is some benefit for some cases and some benefit not to do it for other cases." [Heidi]

Keith took the view that there was urgency to providing publicity in almost every case with the duration of the case leading to more pressure to conduct publicity.

The longevity of social media posts and the enduring nature of social media and general internet information, 'the digital footprint', was concerning. Eyda

described the difficulty with the 'internet archive' of material around the removal of publicity and acknowledged the nature of internet publicity as having a deleterious impact on both the missing person and their family,

"Well, just the way **how quickly a single post on social media or within the news can spread** and how far it can spread, umm, so for someone who can simply, at this point we don't know, but has potentially taken themselves off for a couple of days to get away from a few things and to have every intention of coming back to their normal life, that's **quite a huge impact on them to be all over social media** and that's their private business, however, on the flip side of that, you know, you consider the impact of, someone reports a family member missing with concerns for the mental health or who have expressed suicidal tendencies and the result isn't what we were looking for in that **the person was located deceased**, then **that information is there on social media for the family**, you know to have that **archived in the world of the Internet**, probably would be upsetting as well. So, you do consider the impact, but you have to act on what's most likely to locate and check the safety of that person first." [Eyda]

The issue of family-generated publicity was discussed too. Often conducted without reference to the investigating officer, family-generated publicity was generally deemed as unhelpful and unnecessary by police officers. Such publicity was considered as confusing the 'official' authoritative view of the case presented in police publicity or publicity provided on behalf of the police by the charity, Missing People. Heidi and Keith were clear though that families resorted to their own publicity out of desperation to find their missing loved one. Heidi felt family generated publicity is difficult, if not impossible to control with Keith hoping that continued dialogue with a family could provide an element of control,

"I think that comes out of **acts of desperation** ... they want to do something to find a loved one but, we have no, **we can't police the Internet** and I think that's a call the family need to make within themselves. It's impossible, it's impossible to monitor, that is. **If the family feels so strongly that the publicity will help them, we can't influence that decision. It's already been done.**" [Heidi]

"If the **family decides to go ahead with it, there's not a lot of control we have** around that but what I would suggest is that, at that point we've probably got a single point of contact, the initial investigating officer has handed over to the missing persons team, for example, and **there would be continued dialogue and engagement with family** and that single point of contact and, you know, **any response to the family to get to social media or the wider media we**

**should be able to tap into because of that relationship with developed with them.**" [Keith]

A further balance to be achieved was introduced by Bryan and echoed by Chas who both talked through the balance between providing publicity which may be a risk to a missing person's privacy and protecting the police organisational reputation. The balance here provides a useful reminder on the usefulness and impact of publicity through lens of the police 'needing to be seen to be doing something' which was discussed earlier in Part Two.

"It all revolves around **risk to the person** and ... **the reputation of xxx** [name of police force] **Police** dealing with it as well, so it's finding that balance in the middle." [Bryan]

"Yes, I'm, the other thing as well, and we've had it more recently as well where, let me give you an example where a lady came over from Japan and we've had somebody come down from London who were both suicidal. They were reported missing and, unfortunately, **they were found several weeks later at the Beachy Head**. Umm, but there was **a lot of publicity around those individuals with photographs being put out** ... it would be interesting to see what sort of responses were received in relation to those because the thought I had around that was, actually if I was a member of the family and I saw those I, **that would provide some sort of reassurance that we were taking what they were saying seriously**, and that we were actually, proactively looking for that person. I think that would be, obviously, **some reassurance given the circumstances that, people want to be taken seriously and people want to think that the police are out there searching**, which we are, for their loved ones when they are reported missing. Umm, I think **it's important to convey that message really**, so that's another element to it really." [Keith]

Many of the respondents reported that there was too much publicity given to missing persons' cases. They reported the 'dilution effect': that there was so much publicity given that it was difficult to see any particular case, 'seeing the wood from the trees', no particularly case had any more prominence than another, the publicity was not targeted to any group and in any case, the public appeared blasé in their attitude towards publicity in missing persons' cases. It has been noticed in many police forces that little attention is given to re-tweeting some missing person appeals by the public. In some cases, the public tweet adverse comments, along the lines of 'why are you doing this', 'this is wasting your time', especially in cases

of repeat missing teenagers (Barnes, 2018). The over-use of publicity for repeat missing teenagers particularly, may also lead to people ignoring publicity, as Eyda points out,

“I do think that we, you know, we could become at risk of just losing that, the effectiveness of that quite quickly and I do personally think that the regular missing people, the ones that we’ve assessed, the ones that we have worked with, the ones that we’ve identified as having, you know, certain risks, especially around CSE, that kind of thing, you know, there’s been many times when I sat and debriefed **a missing teenager who has outright said to me but I want to do this, there’s no-one forcing me, there’s nothing wrong with me I want to do this** and if we continue to put those people out on social media then **a lot of people will become quite blasé to that because it’s missing again and they’ll start scrolling through their social media feed ignoring it.**” [Eyda]

At the same time one respondent thought that the attention span of social media users (looking for the next picture of a cute cat) meant that users would spend so little time on images of missing people as to make the publicity useless. Keith likened this attention span to the way in which officers received information during police briefings at the beginning of shifts of duty when he thought that the usefulness of briefings was questionable,

“I haven’t had any feedback around that at all. But my thoughts around that are, it’s very similar with people who are wanted and remain wanted and outstanding for a long time, is that **people’s attention span, especially with social media, is very short.** And so, if you got the same face, the same person coming up time and time again, the **general response from experience is, ‘oh I know about that’.** And we see that in our **team briefings**, funnily enough, with our briefing system is that you would put someone up there under a missing persons bulletin for example, or a wanted header and **the response is ‘yeah we know about’.** Because there’s **nothing really refreshing the importance or the urgency around locating that person.** I think intently with the police, generally at handover, officers are informed of people who remain missing and outstanding and that generally, I speak to, locally for our district, and generally people have a grip on who is missing on the district or certainly people where there is a risk of them being reported missing. But **I don’t think they get that information from our briefing sheets, I think that’s down to experience and the efficiency of the sergeant.** Yes, they get missed in handover, but generally people have got a good grip and a good view of what’s going on. But the same applies to social media in my view, **you have to have a better way of refreshing people’s**

**interests because they only have that short, that short time, attention span."**

[Keith]

Eyda and Frederick referred to the provision of publicity as a 'tick box' exercise, again perhaps another indication of the process-driven nature of the policing response to cases and another reference to the robotic behaviour displayed by officers investigating cases. It is almost as though officers have a check list to work through and will complete tasks whether or not the task is needed or likely to be beneficial.

On the impact of publicity, nearly all the interviewees considered the likely impact on the missing person that any publicity may produce. There was however a fairly strong view, as seen expressed by Frederick,

**"Our issue is to get them back and getting them back is the end of our involvement so there's a temptation to go with the police requirement to do it rather than a more social or individual need to do it."** [Frederick]

that the police need to use publicity was more important than consideration around the impact of such publicity on a missing person or their family with many making the comments that police processes may overlook what was in the best interests of a missing person or the family of missing person. The question of 'best interests' is discussed in the next sub-section as it can be seen that publicity is both rejected and encouraged by missing people.

#### 4.4.10 Stigma, respectability and 'badges of honour'

The damage caused to individuals was also discussed by the respondents along with issues of shame and stigma created within some families by the use of publicity where going missing was seen as a private matter in which the state, in the guise of the police, should not interfere. The mere fact of reporting a case to the police would mean close scrutiny of a family, echoing the reticence to reveal family secrets in 'skeletons in the cupboard' discussion earlier in Part Two.

**"Vulnerability is one and whether, obviously as well, we have to think ... if the person has just gone out for a walk to clear their heads and we declare to the world that they are missing and that they are vulnerable, what impact is that likely to have on them returning home to normality? Can it ever be normal again once their photo has gone out on social media and that they are vulnerable and potentially suicidal. It's, it's all about the missing person**

and their family so if there's anything to suggest to us that if we do circulate their name and photo, that it's going to delay them being found, or if they are subject of criminality and it's going to either alert people in, involved in organised crime, or their captors, or if there's any type criminality involved, well then, obviously, the media release would, err, umm, be affected by that." [Bryan]

"I guess it is mainly considered in relation to two areas. **One would be the impact of finding them because they are quite likely to see the publicity themselves** and will that drive them further underground or potentially **encourage them to come forward themselves** and also to consider the longer term impact in terms of how that will potentially **stigmatise or badge that individual within a community** aspect is well." [Frederick]

Indeed, during the Research Student Forum meeting in April 2019, Professor Campbell described her own experience as a young woman, missing for three months, avoiding the police and while seeing her own missing person's poster, she did not contact her family and was aided by others in avoiding authority. She talked through the stigma, the discrimination and her breach of the family code (but no breach of the law) all emanating from her missing episode. She subsequently left home at 16 years old (Campbell, 2019).

While the impact on a missing person or their family is recognised in policing, actually listening to that impact made the police feel uncomfortable (which may point to a dislike of criticism in policing, perhaps better expressed as, 'professional arrogance').

"Yes, that has entered our heads, especially at the recent PolSA conference there was a presentation by a lady [Esther Beadle] who went missing. Her presentation **upset a lot of people**, but I know from the conversations we had afterwards but if, if maybe she chose her words wrongly, but it is a different impact. She went missing and she didn't, her phone went berserk with everyone contacting her on FB and Twitter and stuff like that, and **that sounds like it didn't help her**. She could have **chosen her words a bit more carefully**, not sure that she knew who was in the audience." [Dave]

There was a sharp contrast with the view of likely damage from publicity appeals and the need for some teenagers particularly, to see publicity appeals as 'badges of honour',

"No, not always. It's, I think in terms of our repeats, our teenage, repeat missing, I think it can be actually quite damaging because of publicising them repeatedly. Another issue is that some of them use it as **a badge of honour**, and, especially

those in care homes after they are in the newspaper, it is seen as a **badge of honour for them because they are outsmarting the police again**, yet again, for another weekend or, for however long they are away. I think we've got, erm, very vulnerable people who are at high risk of imminent harm, then, yea, I don't think that we can justify not doing it in those cases. But, certainly I, **I'm very reluctant to publicise missing people, whoever is publicising, unless there is a really pressing need to do so.**" [Chas]

This notion of publicity being seen by some teenagers as a 'badge of honour' can be seen as an encouragement for publicity which has the impact of increasing visibility for the missing person. It was also introduced into a later conversation regarding aspects of Child Rescue Alert<sup>16</sup> with a number of police forces during an evaluation programme (see for example, Barnes 2018).

Only one respondent talked through one effect of wide scale publicity appeals and the possibility of the creation of false and empathetic sightings of the missing person that could skew an investigation's focus on a particular area. Sightings information needs to be treated with caution and should be corroborated before resources deployment,

**"If we don't have, for example, a decent description or a decent picture or location last seen**, mode of transport, which sometimes clouds the issue and people phone up and say oh, I think I saw them, and **you get multiple, bogus, random calls that lead you nowhere**. ... people will phone up with the best intentions and say that they've **seen them all over the country**, and that can cause more problems than, than, the actual the investigation itself and **send you off on a complete wrong, you know, send you off on all sorts of leads.**"

[Chas]

It is interesting that one respondent, Eyda, talked through a procedural justice approach to the provision by the police of publicity in missing persons' cases without using term, 'procedural justice',

**"I think it's more just if we were to really explain to people and have a general understanding of why we do what we do I think we'd be criticised less** in the long, you know, rather than lacking in communication and sometimes **police officers can fall foul of becoming quite robotic**, they attend and fill out

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<sup>16</sup> A system to produce intense and focused local, regional or national publicity for a very high risk missing or abducted child using number of diffusion mechanisms and social media/app-based platforms. Child Rescue Alert is subject of evaluation research programmes here in the UK as well as within the European Union and the States so is not covered here.



a person's report and they leave whereas I think sometimes, personally, myself, I just use that as a recording tool, I'll fill it out, I'll ask the questions that need to be asked **but the majority of my time spent with people, I'll be having a general conversation, getting a general idea of who they are as people, who they are as a family**, what their concerns are, are they genuine, is this normal behaviour, and in that discussion **by building that rapport I can normally explain the processes and they'd fully understand why we do things and why we need to things** and I think if that the case across the board then I think we would, we would have less issues in the long it comes to placing information into the media." [Eyda]

The subject of procedural justice has already been introduced earlier (in Part Two, 'Cultural issues') and is discussed more fully in Chapter Five. The remainder of this part of the analysis and discussion is taken up with the 'right to be forgotten', an idea coming out of a discourse of privacy for the last decade or so in the European Union and concretised in 2018 within the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Data Protection Act 2018. The legislation gives individuals greater control of their personal data that is held by third parties, such as retailers or social networks. The regulation aims to harmonise data flows between all member states and bolster the rights that EU citizens have over their data held and processed by organisations (see Information Commissioners Office, undated and ITPro, undated).

#### 4.4.11 The right to be forgotten

Five of the respondents talked through 'the right to be forgotten' or the right to remain invisible. This term is usually applied in the slightly different context of internet, data and information security and privacy; in having personal information and data deleted from searches performed by the larger internet search engines (such as Google, Mozilla Firefox, Safari and Microsoft Edge products) so that previously available material can no longer be located, read and used. Nevertheless, 'the right to be forgotten' is a useful way of describing missing persons cases which are reported to the police but ought not to be investigated by the police as it is too significant an intrusion of a person's privacy or private life.

Adults, particularly, are able to make life choices (and sometime make very bad life choices) without hindrance or objection by the state (in the form the police). In these types of cases, the police face a dilemma: to investigate the case

which may contravene human rights law (particularly Article 8, European Convention on Human Rights, 2013), or to decide not to investigate but then have to persuade a family that police action may be too intrusive and that the family should seek an alternative remedy to find their missing loved one. The respondents' views on the right to be forgotten and lawful interventions to find missing people varied from understanding and considering the issues in relevant cases to acknowledging the difficulties posed by families needing to know the whereabouts of their loved ones. 'Work arounds' to reduce exposure during media campaigns were also discussed along with some acceptance that the police cannot control everything,

"I take **a great deal of notice**, I think we, we ignore the fact that if we are of sound mind and are adults, we can do pretty much what we like and if I, if **I want to withdraw from society**, I should **be allowed to do so** ... but I quite often have had cases where people have been reported missing where they've told the family, I'm going away, **I need some time to myself**, I'm sick of all this hassle, don't try and contact me because you can't and **you'll get them reported as missing and under our system**, they'll go **on the system as missing** ... you then get **pressure from senior officers and the family to go and find them**. But they've made a decision, with the right mind, that they want to be missing and I've often argued that we shouldn't do anything in the case, we'll monitor it, but that's it. That person **should be allowed to do what they like**." [Chas]

Here Chas is addressing the very topical and current issue in policing missing persons, when should the police intervene in a reported missing person's case? Known as 'levels of intervention' and a determination of 'if and when' the police should respond are in review at the time of writing between the National Crime Agency, National Police Chiefs' Council and the College of Policing.

"I would say **a significant amount**, you know and again, people **do have the right to be forgotten** but then I think you need to understand that, you know, it's about people going through their life and there's the Google and Facebook stuff, and that goes back **to thinking sometimes is it best for us to**, you know, **to be doing that social media appeal**? And **everyone has a right to privacy** and I do agree, I am aware of it and the current legal framework surrounding it and I think that we, again, in the police, **we have a duty to protect that as well by not doing a social media appeal** for every single one." [Heidi]

"But then there are **pathways around it**, **do we have to include their surname** can we not say just Paul, 65 from Middlesbrough, last seen down the High Street, so it kind of **closes that kind of potential risk** so it's still, so **we are still making**

**our media appeal.** Still closing that gap, you know, saying we need to do a media appeal but the right to be forgotten is there, i.e. it's not that researchable.” [Heidi]

Heidi's ambivalence is common in policing expressing the dilemma set out in the opening paragraphs of this section: the right to privacy and making a limited publicity appeal.

“I don't know really, I guess it depends who has, the thing with smartphones, mobile phones, if anything is posted whether it gets interest for the right reasons or the wrong reasons, **everyone's got the capability to take a screenshot or that information will always be out there** I don't think we'll ever be able to, **even if you delete the official, the original post, you don't know who's obtained that information once it's public** and I don't think there's any way around that unless we weren't to post it in the first place.” [Eyda]

On the other side of this argument is the other difficulty faced by the police when, having located a missing person, the now found person does not wish either to have the police tell family and friends that they have been found or to tell the family and friends of their new location. This type of news is very challenging for families and coming to terms with the facts that their missing loved one does not want to be found or does not wish to return home takes time. The strong protection laws in the UK and across Europe under GDPR and the home legislation, the Data Protection Act 2018 mean that the police must comply with a competent adult's wishes and not reveal the safety or whereabouts of the now found person.

“We can only give **information that that person is fit and well**, they're an adult and of sound mind and **they got right to, to effectively disappear** as they wish.” [Bryan]

“We do deal with cases where someone is reported missing and then when they are located, they don't want other people to know and **we respect that and then we would not treat them as missing any more**. As once **as soon as someone exercises their right to be forgotten**, we would generally then, **not have them marked down as a missing person**.” [Frederick]

“If somebody has been missing previously and **they should have the ability to ask the police or any other agency to remove their photographs or press releases** about them being missing from the Internet.” [Eric]

The application of the right to be forgotten for some police forces may mean that cases are effectively ‘written off’ and not investigated.

Of some concern is perhaps the possibility of lack of interest, knowledge or application of data protection principles in missing persons’ cases as three respondents did not consider the right to be forgotten as an issue for the police.

#### 4.4.12 Summary of Part Three

Building on themes from Parts One and Two, additional themes are added as in the table below that provides a composite listing of themes indicative of causing or promoting (in)visibility or starting to describe the characteristics of (in)visibility and how these characteristics may operate in the policing of missing persons. Again, a full summary written as a narrative is provided in Part Five below together with a view on how the evidence and theme has the potential to answer any of the research questions.

- Policing structure and arrangements – policies and procedures – police discretion - all appear to have a direct impact on (in)visibility in *missing*
- The role of the police – police culture – the dark figure of *missing* - the value of people – trust and confidence in the police – procedural justice – have a very strong influence on the visibility of missing people. Lack of knowledge of the missing phenomenon leads to invisibility
- Adherence to process – robotism – use of technology – loss of data - the ‘everydayness’ of *missing* – blasé attitudes – cyclical and repeated nature of police response – process-driven behaviours also appear to be present in the application of categories and in what appears to be the unthinking use of publicity - perhaps one of the more striking conclusions from the thesis is the impact of process-driven approaches in policework
- The utility of categorisations in making sense of the world and enabling police work to be conducted balanced by the reduction of the person-as-such
- The usefulness or otherwise of publicity in *missing* – pointing to the almost complete lack of underpinning research on the effectiveness of publicity coupled with the enduring digital legacy of publicity provides fertile ground for both invisibility to occur alongside a very public, and mostly unwanted, kind of visibility countering the right to be forgotten
- Reputational risk – personal risk and organisational risk – being seen to be doing something - assist in the disguise of missing people as may promote a culture of risk aversion and concurrently, may reveal more of people as criticism may prompt

attention to an investigation opposed by the futility of some police actions in order to placate a family

- Work-related stress – emotional labour – witness talk – immersion in cases - consequences of policing structures and arrangements as much as operational activity, stress assists in the creation of (in)visibility while emotional labour can assist in promoting visibility. Reputational risk and stress combined may lead to insufficient attention being paid to relevant cases as attention is overly focused on all cases
- Spatialities and temporalities – how time and space create opportunities for (in)visibility in *missing* – the elapse of time drives (in)visibility as search is reduced but publicity may increase (to mark anniversaries, for example). The notion of ‘space’ continues, in addition to missing people occupying space in the mind, in policy, in statistics, etc., through their journeys and the search for them, missing people occupy a physical and geographic space
- Statistics hiding the essence of personhood – revelation of rich picture of *missing* – on balance statistics can be said to be fairly neutral in the creation of (in)visibility
- Certainty in investigations – family attitudes – ‘skeletons in the cupboard’ – reveals that the more the police seek certainty (visibility) the more a family may create invisibility

Table 9: Possible characteristics and potential causes of (in)visibility in missing persons - 3

Having concluded Part Three, the narrative, analysis of responses and the discussion now moves on to Part Four and considers the last four elements of the investigation cycle.

#### 4.5 Part Four: Review, Management of the return, harm reduction strategies (safeguarding) and multi-agency liaison and family support

##### 4.5.1 Introduction

The fourth section of the analysis concerns the remaining elements of the investigation cycle and their impact on (in)visibility in *missing*. Of concern here is the visibility/invisibility of the return of a missing person: at a time when the person is present back in a family or workplace, they are lost to the police worldview. The stigma created by a missing episode may also serve to reduce the person’s visibility to their families and the returned person may take time to adjust, find themselves and their own sense of being and self-worth. This could be seen as bringing a sense of visibility to oneself. The evidence from the

respondents was limited in these last four elements due to the fact that the elements were not covered by specific questions in the topic guide, except for one question around cases retaining a presence in case management systems over time. The evidence shown in this last part has had to be gleaned from responses to this single question and to the other questions on which an analysis and discussion has already been provided in Parts Two and Three.

As the evidence is limited the last four elements are contained in a single short, and final part of the analysis and discussion chapter rather than occupying a part of their own. This part deals, in turn, with the Review; the Management of the return; Harm reduction strategies (safeguarding) and Multi-agency liaison and family support elements of the cycle.

#### 4.5.2 Review

This is shown as the innermost and red circle in the investigation cycle reproduced from the APP in Part One (p. 83, above). The review process is part of a model of supervision recommended in the APP (and reproduced below as Figure 11, p. 173). The model of supervision sets out responsibilities of local sergeants and inspectors through detective oversight to local command team review and includes long term case review. It should be noted that the term 'cold case review' is also used, but this should not be confused with long term case reviews. Cold case reviews are conducted, often *en bloc* with other similar age cases, as and when review teams have time and capacity to conduct the necessary work. Many police forces conduct cold case reviews as an annual stock take or audit of outstanding cases and to see if additional work, particularly additional forensic work, is feasible and worthwhile in producing a result. The APP suggests (and note here that it is guidance only and not statutory guidance although police forces are held to account in terms of their compliance and adherence to the APP by both HMICFRS and the IOPC) that reviews should take place regularly, the frequency of which will be determined by the circumstances of the case (College of Policing, 2017).

Detective oversight is preferred as a detective supervisor has the required investigative expertise. Reviews should occur as soon as possible in high-risk cases and in all other cases no later than 48 hours after the report is made to the police. The reviewing officer's rank should be no less than that of a

detective inspector. When urgent and immediate actions are required and investigative lines which require more time to achieve or resolve are taking place, early decisions should be taken to ensure that the missing person case is reviewed at appropriate intervals. The APP sets out a number of purposes for reviews which include, *inter alia*, to review the level of risk; to check for any outstanding and incomplete actions; and, set new actions and enquiries in order to bring the investigation to a successful conclusion.

There are discussions ongoing within a number of working groups (for example, the NPCC-led, National Police Missing Persons Working Group) around the status and competence of the 'reviewing officer' as well as the timeliness and regularity of reviews. Detective inspectors are very busy people and there is a view that uniformed colleagues at sergeant and inspector ranks are equally competent to carry out the review process. There are concerns too, that conducting reviews to a 48-hour timescale is too onerous in many cases and other timescales could be substituted.

## A model of supervision

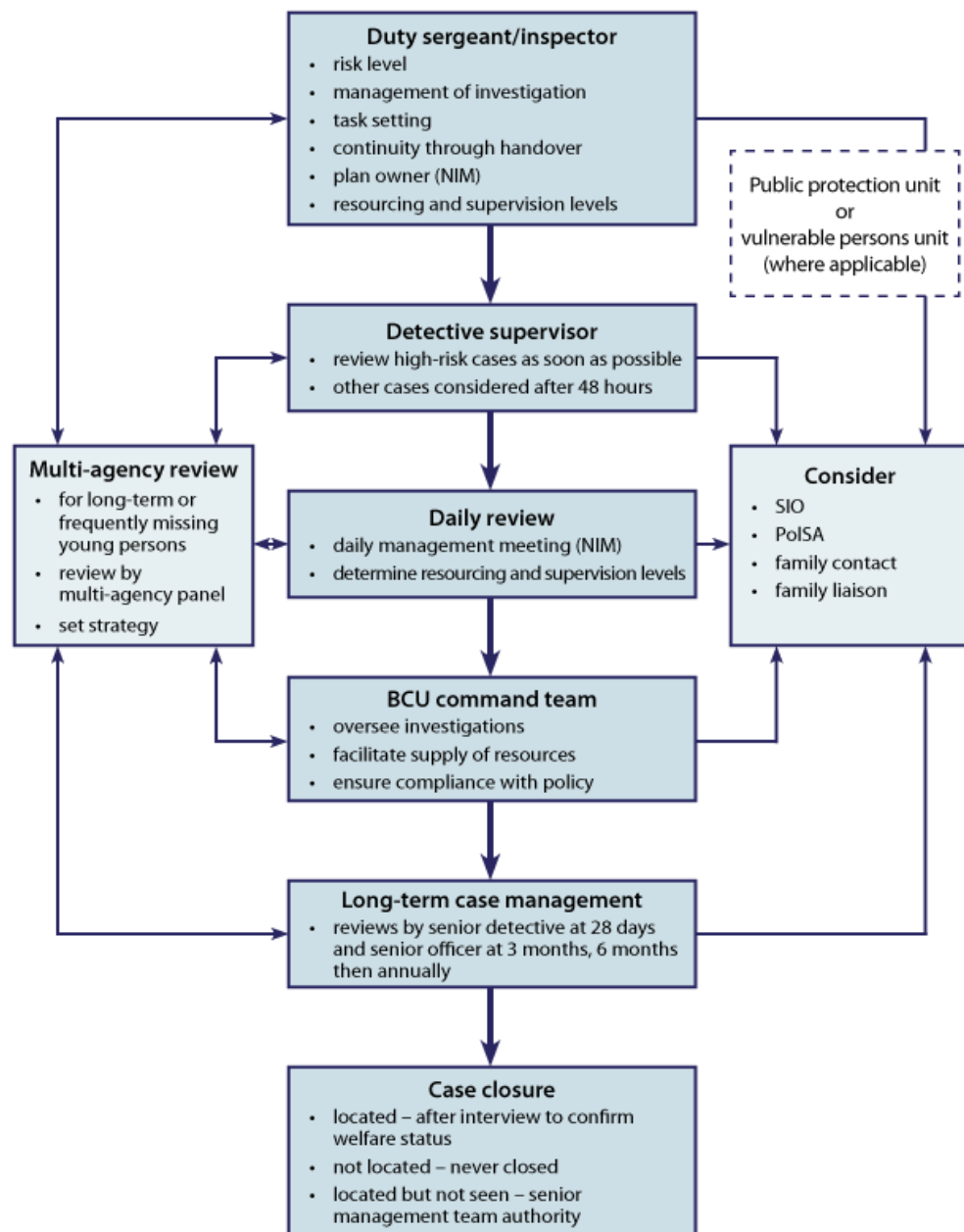


Figure 11: A model of supervision (College of Policing, 2017)

It is recognised that in most missing cases, a person will be found or will return within a fairly short period of time. The majority of missing people return within 72 hours (National Crime Agency, 2019). Some cases, however, will take much longer to resolve and police activity may be less visible to a family or carer givers. In long term cases, it is important that a family or care givers are kept up to date with developments and reassured that enquiries are continuing (College of Policing, 2017).



In this part of the semi-structured interviews, the respondents were asked one question revolving around the 'presence' or visibility of long-term cases. The way cases are managed and reviewed in case management systems, especially the management of long-term cases, may also lead to cases being overlooked and the possibility of cases becoming lost or invisible in computer systems increases in comparison with more current cases. As Heidi and Bryan comment, good review processes can avoid this type of increasing invisibility,

"... I think that **long-term [cases] can be pushed to one side due to operational demands**. But, that's where I expect the missing person co-ordinators to ensure that the relevant, err, you know, reviews are completed ... I believe that's their role to, you know, to pin down a superintendent to do a twelve-month review can be a bit of a challenge and they won't have time, nor do I expect them to, to know that they have to do that ...". [Heidi]

"... once it's been dealt with on a force-wide basis with the resources helping from other departments, it'll fall back then to a local area level, after which it'll **be discussed at fairly regular intervals** and then a decision will be made after some time, based on risk, based on new information to say, OK, **we'll close it from the system now so that the person, or the detail of it, is not shown on the home screen**, if you like, but, they are **still on the not found list**, and there will be a review period in place for them, for that to be reviewed at a later date, whatever timescale that they deem necessary." [Bryan]

"Yes, I think the way you do it is, **you do close the log down**, but you **just schedule reviews for a particular time and date**. So, you can then search on, umm, err, on an inactive review basis, if you like. And it will show you that the person still has active reviews in place. You can plug into it and it will tell you which reviews are still live, whether it's three-monthly, six-monthly or annual review, and, as part of **my previous role I used to do most of the annual reviews on the long-term cases** having, obviously, linked in with the local officers in the local area to establish if there was any ... obviously, new information. And I don't know how much information you require but **in doing such a review we came across an individual who had been missing for several years**." [Bryan]

Seen here are two opposing tendencies, one is that long term cases can be become invisible to most of the police organisation due to the cases being re-classified ('put away'). The only team to review these types of cases might be a missing persons' co-ordinating team or a long term case review team and either way, the original investigating officer(s) will have no visibility of the case and

from that, the missing person themselves becomes increasingly invisible as time elapses. The second is that cases which do receive regular and structured reviews will continue to be visible through time from Bryan's comment, stand the chance of becoming completely visible through being found.

#### 4.5.3 Management of the return

The investigative cycle moves on to the management of the return. This element of the cycle was not covered in any of the questions asked of the respondents. In a review of the overall evidence only two respondents made comments about 'the return'. Chas said that he did "very little to be honest ... from a humanity point of view, there's very little that our officers will, err, offer to the missing person or the victim's, the reporting family or friends." Chas added that the return interview was a perfunctory process, arguing that once the interview was done and a referral made to social services, that was the completing stage of an investigation,

"... where the missing persons process is concerned. As long as we've done a return interview, **that's the box ticked**, as far as xxx [name of police force] Police is concerned. ... Depending on the circumstances we will submit the form to, err, social services when somebody goes missing. But again, I don't have a great deal of faith in that because, it gets shared, but nothing ever seems to come of it. Err, **so from a welfare-wise, humanity-wise, pretty much, pretty much nothing ever comes of it.**" [Chas]

Having partial or incomplete information, particularly from prevention interviews (formerly known as police 'safe and well' checks: an immediate assessment by police on finding a missing person or seeing a returned missing person at home to review the person's safety and wellbeing. These checks have been widely criticised by those outside of policing as inadequate and officers, themselves, have felt untrained, ill-equipped and unsupported in making an assessment as to a person's wellbeing, especially from a mental health perspective). Return home interviews (often conducted by a 'professional' third party organisation, such as Barnardos and The Children's Society, see for example, Pona et al., 2019 and Missing People, 2019) and other 'found' reports on police IT systems contain information and intelligence seen as being critical in understanding a missing episode(s) in order to enable safeguarding and other actions to be

conducted with a view to ensuring the proper care of returned missing person and preventing repeat missing episodes.

Eric commented that his police force was negotiating for a new return home interview service to be established. A new contract was to be offered by the local Police and Crime Commissioner as Eric explained,

“And a bid has recently gone into him, he has approved funding towards **a return interview project** with, for [a named county] for example which is a significant, **will be a significant improvement for us** because, for example [a named county] has more children’s care homes pretty much than anywhere else in the country. We’ve got 400 children in [a named county] from 91 other local authorities who we used to know very little about and by and large **they were not receiving return home interviews as required by statute** by the placing local authorities. And **the police are not receiving a, any information** from those local authorities about the **outcomes of the return interviews and identification of any harm and risk, intelligence that we could use,** could use to help keep them safe here in [a named police force area].” [Eric]

There is insufficient evidence from the participants on which to base any interpretation on impact or otherwise on the (in)visibility created through the management of the return. The return itself is considered as invisible due to the cursory nature of police ‘prevention interviews’ (formerly ‘safe and well checks’) and the lack of return home interviews for adults in England and Wales. However, there is much sector information on the return and, in Scotland, it can be seen that the police deliver most of the return interviews alongside prevention interviews. Police Scotland also conduct return interviews for adults in a service that is unique to Scotland as south of the border return interviews are mandatory for children only and consequently conducted only with returned missing children. The invisibility of the return led to the 2016 ‘National Conversation events series’ in England, Wales and Scotland between the charity, Missing People and the University of Glasgow (Parr and Holmes, 2016).

Even with children, the return interviews have been subject of much criticism from the third sector, notably both reports point to systematic failures to interview and safeguard children returning from being missing effectively through inadequate funding, service and staff availability and importantly, not listening properly to the voices of the children concerned; all this in spite of a surfeit of information on the conduct of interviews available from both organisations’ websites.

The result has the potential to lead to the creation of invisibility from police, civil society and social services' perspectives as it is possible to argue that that the missing person's return is invisible at an important moment through which knowledge about the missing episode and the drivers for the episode in the life of person could be communicated for prevention purposes (through an onward referral to safeguarding services). That this is dismissed by officers, particularly in relation to a non-statutory service for adults, risks rendering the 'return' as invisible. The person is now returned and therefore present but becomes instantly absent in a police world-view. Matter are compounded by the apparent irregularity of mandatory interviews for children.

There is hope on the horizon that the picture for return interviews for vulnerable adults will improve with the forthcoming publication of a new framework document (Missing People, 2020) emerging from work conducted under the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Missing Children and Adults. The framework advocates for the structures and services that are available for children to be available in a similar way for vulnerable adults.

Further work in the NPCC Missing Persons portfolio can be seen in the consultation around prospective changes to the College of Policing APP on missing; police forces are being asked views on combining prevention interviews and return interviews alongside allowing greater flexibility in respect of both interviews through an appropriate person conducting the interview, at the most appropriate time with the best interests of the returned child or vulnerable adult being the determining factor (NPCC, 2020).

There is also concurrent work (Department for Education, 2020) by the Child Protection, Safeguarding and Family Law team at the Department for Education which has released a consultation on a revision of the 2014 guidance on missing from home and care (Department for Education, 2014). It is the 2014 guidance that mandates the conduct of return home interviews for children and the new revised guidance is likely to strengthen the way in which interviews are completed as a consequence of the criticisms discussed above.

#### 4.5.4 Harm reduction strategies (safeguarding) and multi-agency liaison and family support

The investigative cycle moves on to harm reduction strategies: the safeguarding of people who have been missing to either reduce repeat episodes of missing or to prevent any further episodes. The cycle is encircled by the blue lines of multi-agency liaison and family support. These elements of the cycle were not covered in any of the questions asked of the respondents.

#### 4.5.5 Summary of Part Four

In summary, little evidence for these last four elements of the investigation cycle was adduced for the purposes of any sort of conclusive analysis or interpretive comments. Building on thematic areas from Parts One, Two and Three, additional areas are added as in the table below that provides a composite listing of themes indicative of causing or promoting (in)visibility or starting to describe the characteristics of (in)visibility and how these characteristics may operate in the policing of missing persons.

- Policing structure and arrangements – policies and procedures – police discretion - all appear to have a direct impact on (in)visibility in *missing*. Lack of knowledge of the missing phenomenon contributes to invisibility
- The role of the police – police culture – the dark figure of *missing* - the value of people – trust and confidence in the police – procedural justice – have a very strong influence on the visibility of missing people
- Adherence to process – robotism – use of technology – loss of data - the ‘everydayness’ of *missing* – blasé attitudes – cyclical and repeated nature of police response – process-driven behaviours also appear to be present in the application of categories and in what appears to be the unthinking use of publicity - perhaps one of the more striking conclusions from the thesis is the impact of process-driven approaches in policework - the utility of categorisations in making sense of the world and enabling police work to be conducted balanced by the reduction of the person-as-such
- The usefulness or otherwise of publicity in *missing* – pointing to the almost complete lack of underpinning research on the effectiveness of publicity coupled with the enduring digital legacy of publicity provides fertile ground for both invisibility to occur alongside a very public, and mostly unwanted, kind of visibility countering the right to be forgotten

- Reputational risk – personal risk and organisational risk – being seen to be doing something - assist in the disguise of missing people as may promote a culture of risk aversion and concurrently, may reveal more of people as criticism may prompt attention to an investigation opposed by the futility of some police actions in order to placate a family
- Work-related stress – emotional labour – witness talk – immersion in cases - consequences of policing structures and arrangements as much as operational activity, stress assists in the creation of (in)visibility while emotional labour can assist in promoting visibility. Reputational risk and stress combined may lead to insufficient attention being paid to relevant cases as attention is overly focused on all cases
- Spatialities and temporalities – how time and space create opportunities for (in)visibility in *missing* – the elapse of time drives (in)visibility as search is reduced but publicity may increase (to mark anniversaries, for example). The notion of ‘space’ continues, in addition to missing people occupying space in the mind, in policy, in statistics, etc., through their journeys and the search for them, missing people occupy a physical and geographic space. Over time, the review of cases can have the potential both to reduce and increase visibility of a missing individual
- Statistics hiding the essence of personhood – revelation of rich picture of *missing* – on balance statistics can be said to be fairly neutral in the creation of (in)visibility
- Certainty in investigations – family attitudes – ‘skeletons in the cupboard’ – reveals that the more the police seek certainty (visibility) the more a family may create invisibility
- Returning from *missing* – police dismissal of a return at a time when the person is present renders the return and the person to be invisible to the police contrasted with the visibility of person to their family and workplace if perhaps not to themselves as part of a voyage of self-discovery

Table 10: Possible characteristics and potential causes of (in)visibility in missing persons - 4

As previously stated, a full summary written as a narrative is provided in the following section, Part Five below, together with a view on how the evidence and thematic area have the potential to answer any of the research questions.

#### 4.6 Part Five - Conclusions

In this concluding section, the thematic areas are condensed and summarised into four key drivers of (in)visibility: internal police-centred factors; external, person or community-centred factors; temporal and spatial factors. It should be noted that the four key drivers are not mutually exclusive, and the temporal and

spatial drivers cross over the other two. In this section, references are made throughout to my research questions which are reproduced here again for ease. My overarching research objective was the exploration of the concept of '(in)visibility' in policing missing people.. I designed three RQs as set out here:

- what is meant by (in)visibility in missing?
- what causes (in)visibility in missing?
- how does (in)visibility operate in missing and what is the impact?

#### 4.6.1 Internal police-centred factors creating (in)visibility

Internal police-centred factors include police occupational culture, procedures and organisational behaviours and these factors can be seen in the thematic areas. The role of the police is bound up with structural uncertainty and dilemmas in policing and is captured under the perennial question of, 'is missing police work or social work'? and the administration or bureaucracy of *missing*.

The evidence from the participants points to structures and arrangements in policing designed to make missing persons as visible as possible from both policy and operational procedure angles. The resourcing of investigations and safeguarding actions also presents strongly to support visibility so may be viewed as a cause of visibility. In comparison, however, it seems as soon as individuals or groups of police officers or staff become involved in the application of policy or in operations, unintended consequences start to become apparent (see, for example, Doreen McBarnet's 1981 work in which she compares 'law in books' and 'law in action'). According to Wilson (1988), such is the discretion in policing, officers are able to exercise control over what they do or do not do.

From this discussion on the organisational and policy context of missing persons within policing, several emergent thematics can be seen perhaps as the characteristics of (in)visibility and how they may operate along with promoting visibility or causing invisibility. The role of the police or the police mission is seen both to foster invisibility as there are suggestions that *missing* is not a matter for the police and as cause of visibility as the subject area should be in the hands of experienced and capable warranted officers only. Police culture, in the sense of mission, isolation and machismo is seen to exacerbate

the development of invisibility and is explored more fully in Chapter Five. Knowledge of the phenomenon of missing is also seen to contribute to invisibility.

The strict adherence to procedure and associated robotic behaviours driven by executing the same tasks, seen by many as mundane administrative tasks, repeatedly and blindly have the consequence of not applying sufficient thought to any particular case. This type of structural sanctification relates to Merton's description of bureaucratic organisations and 'the tremendous symbolic significance of the means' (1940, p.564 cited in Björk, 2018). For Waddington (2013), in policing order maintenance, criminal investigation and crime prevention are not the focal points of activity; instead, rigid regulations in the form of policies and procedures are primary.

Doing sufficient work on a case to avoid criticism lends weight to the argument that invisibility is created by processual approach. In addition, the cyclical and repeated nature of the police response can ignore vulnerabilities again leading to increased invisibility. Behaviours may be caused, in part, by the design and, in part, by the use of technology systems for the recording of cases. I have shown how the use of technology drives process inducing the belief that adherence to process is more important than any human aspects as well as having the potential to lose data as transfers across systems are automatically conducted. The necessary police acquisition of data on missing persons ought not to be driving invisibility and sophisticated recording mechanisms are needed to avoid repetitive tasks. The impact here is seen as the diminution of the person-as-such (Edkins, 2011) in favour of process of recording a person as missing. One of the consequences of using processes is the utilisation of categories and categorical data. While categories help make sense of the world (Trungpa, 1973 and Langer, 2014) and in this instance enable police work to be conducted, categorisation again leads to the reduction of the person-as-such.

Reputational risk, in terms of personal risk of criticism or sanction as well as organisational risk, may lead to a preference for a process-driven approach to missing and insufficient attention being paid to relevant aspects of a case leaning towards invisibility. Work-related stress (Fenton, 2015 and Jindal-Snape, 2018), may promote a culture of risk aversion again leading to insufficient attention being paid to relevant cases as attention may be overly



focused on all cases. Associated with work-related stress is the expenditure of emotional labour (Turgoose *et al.*, 2017; MacEachern *et al.*, 2018; Lennie *et al.*, 2019; Burnett *et al.*, 2019; and, Curran, 2020) when dealing with missing persons. The time constraints on busy response officers, along with the expenditure of emotional labour especially when engaging in 'witness talk' (Parr *et al.*, 2007; Parr and Stevenson, 2014) and in more general missing investigative activities like search can be an exhausting process which may also be responsible for assisting invisibility. Two effects can be seen: the creation of a lack of involvement and thus invisibility of the missing person and concurrently (in different officers) the creation of a willingness to be immersed in cases and increased visibility of the person.

It is also noted that only following a process may not reveal the missing person sufficiently enough to be found. The everydayness of *missing* (following Pain, 2014) may disguise important cases in the sheer volumes of work related to missing persons and promote blasé attitudes towards missing people, especially repeat missing teenagers. When linked to a lack of knowledge in some officers (not in the dedicated teams), invisibility of *missing* is more likely to result.

The police quest for certainty in investigations (Fyfe *et al.*, 2015) often starts with elementary and necessary lines of enquiry often expressed in police terminology as 'clearing the ground under your feet'. The quest can be seen as being obstructed by a reticence to reveal family secrets in the early stages of an investigation. In this situation, the investigating officers are seeking greater visibility but thwarted in some cases by family members reluctant to reveal their truths. Invisibility is generated by families themselves attempting to keep 'skeletons in the cupboard' firmly locked away.

#### 4.6.2 External, person or community-centred factors

The second set of key factors relate to matters outside of policing and to some extent these are outwith the control of the police and are in the hands of a missing person, their family or carers, or the community. The factors relate to how individuals and communities interact with the police, for example, by not reporting missing persons because of a lack of trust or conflict with the norms of a community.

I have shown how police culture has the potential to affect the dark figure of missing, but it can also be seen that the dark figure may be driven by families, communities and by society as well. When discussing the 'dark figure' of unreported missing people (that is people who are missing but either not reported to the police or if reported, not recorded as such by the police), the value of people, presented as an argument about undeserving victims or greivable lives (Butler, 2009 and Lewis et al., 2015) to other people, to communities and to the police may lead to limited or no attention being paid to some missing people perhaps considered by the police as police property (Lee, 1981). Ignoring particular people in this way may only lead to invisibility. References have been made to various typologies, such as, 'the unmissed'; 'the underserving missing'; 'the ungrievable missing'; the 'missing missing' (Butler, 2009; Edkins, 2011; and Lewis et al., 2015) as well as to cultural or societal issues which predominantly revolve around trust and confidence in the authorities but also include urban myths about waiting for some pre-defined time period to elapse before calling the police.

That trust and confidence in the police has emerged from the evidence is curious in that it is the police respondents talking about this issue which would normally be introduced by family members or by communities; that the police recognise this as an issue may be seen as good community policing. Trust and confidence in the police may also be improved by using a procedural justice approach (covered more fully in the next chapter) to the policing of missing persons and it is interesting to note that this approach was mentioned (although not by name) by some of the participants. Put together, these thematics are seen to be causes of (in)visibility in missing.

The amount of publicity created for missing people can create visibility: some desired as 'badges of honour' and some unwanted due to an enduring digital footprint. Publicity can create invisibility due to the disparities of who gets publicity, and here the missing white woman syndrome may apply, and the over-whelming nature of publicity for missing people causing a sense of 'you can't see the wood for the trees'. Some missing people cases, for example the disappearances of Madeleine McCann or April Jones, can create signal events (Innes, 2014) which can cause unease in society and perhaps lead to moral panics. Categories and categorisation are also used in decisions around the

application of publicity in *missing*. The usefulness or otherwise of publicity in *missing* is not underpinned by any real evidence base; there is almost a complete lack of field research on the effectiveness of publicity. When coupled with an enduring digital legacy, the thematic of publicity provides fertile ground for both invisibility to occur alongside a very public, and a mostly unwanted, kind of visibility countering the right to be forgotten.

A conclusion to be drawn is that thinking through the right to be forgotten has the impact of increasing the visibility of the person involved; they are considered as a person-as-such and treated with respect for their wishes. If the right is ignored, the police action is still likely to increase visibility for the missing person, but this will be an unwanted, unwarranted and disproportionate increase in visibility for a person who wants to remain unseen and anonymous. There is a real irony here that a person's wish to be invisible is ignored first by a family seeking to find their 'missing' loved one (noting that the person is unlikely not consider themselves as missing) and then by the police seeking to assuage the feelings of the family and appearing to be doing something constructive to assist in locating the person. The wished invisibility being denied in the course of constructing visibility.

#### 4.6.3 Temporal and spatial qualities of *missing*

Notions of 'space' and 'time' are introduced throughout the chapter: missing people may occupy space in policy and practice, they occupy space in structures and the organisation of policing (Parr and Fyfe, 2012; Fyfe *et al.*, 2015), and they occupy space in police time and for Edkins (2011) they occupy insufficient spaces to be properly recognised and thus become invisible. Time is allocated for investigations by single officers, response teams or by dedicated officers. For families, time passes in a different way (Katz, 2017 and Katz and Shalev Greene, 2020) and creates different issues in comparison to policing. Dependent on how space and time are considered, both visibility and invisibility may be created.

The temporalities of *missing* continue to be seen in reporting and common myths around missing persons and to a certain extent in the production of statistics. Producing statistics has the dual property of reducing people to numbers and hiding the essence of personhood among the volumes of data

together with the revelation of the 'rich picture' of missing so useful in policy design. Over time, the need for action builds as the volume, diversity and intensity of statistics become overwhelming. Temporalities have the effect of creating invisibility in individual cases but promoting visibility in relation to a scale of a problem and as a matter to be dealt with.

The temporal qualities of missing appear also to promote (in)visibility: the phases over time of a missing episode experienced by the missing person create opportunities for both visibility and invisibility; for families experience the episode time can become distorted as (in)visibility of the missing waxes and wanes; and, for the police, the passing of time is marked by periods of activity (seen in terms of search and publicity) and inactivity (seen in terms of review and investigative pauses as no leads are found) in the investigation as the missing person comes into and out of view with varying degrees of (in)visibility. Reviews of investigations themselves are governed by time: after so many hours, days or months have elapsed reviews should take place leading to missing people moving in and out of visibility during the review process. The spatial qualities of missing are suggested as having an impact on (in)visibility and the notion of 'space', in journeys and the search for them, missing people occupy a physical and geographic space concurrently with occupying a temporal space.

The process of the return also promotes visibility in that the missing person is seen, in most cases, to be 'safe and well' in the early stages of a return, but then the person may disappear in un-reviewed or un-actioned referrals to other caring agencies. As stated already, the dismissal of the return in the police world view at a time when the person is present perhaps enables the return to be invisible to the police.

The next chapter, Chapter Five, presents analytical thematics emerging from the data to elaborate police culture, police language and procedural justice in relation to missing people and (in)visibility. It presents an additional analysis, taking the analysis further and releasing it from the constraints of the model of the investigative cycle.

## Chapter Five – (In)visibility and Missing: police culture, language, and procedural justice

### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the thematic emerging from the data that elaborate police culture, police language and procedural justice in relation to missing people. These thematic provide an additional framework for analysis and discussion and anchor notions of (in)visibility and *missing* from a different perspective. It will be seen that police culture and police language, for the most part, increase the sense of invisibility of a missing person while the adoption of procedural justice should promote a sense of visibility of a missing person. The chapter builds on the introduction to police culture in Chapter Four, Part One (p. 86) and examines features of police culture evident in the data. Acknowledging that the literature is based mainly on ethnographic work with ‘street cops’, three features of police culture: mission-action-cynicism-pessimism, isolation/solidarity and machismo can be observed in the participants’ responses. All are considered to have an impact on (in)visibility in the police response to missing persons. The chapter moves on to consider how police language usage can occasionally breakdown relationships between the police, families and wider communities creating invisibility of *missing*. It considers how language shapes the national and international political context of *missing* with confusing results for (in)visibility. Lastly in this chapter, there is a short discourse on procedural justice developing the introduction from Chapter Four, Part Two, ‘Cultural issues’ sub section (p. 133) and setting out the importance of this approach in policing missing persons to produce visibility and counteract the potential increasing invisibility created by culture and language.

During the coding of the data (as set out in Chapter Three – Methodology), some codes were amalgamated in successive iterations of the coding and then, in the fourth revision of the coding (see Appendix J vi), the same codes (as in the table below) were removed.

|   |                    |
|---|--------------------|
| force geography, communities and populations          | Police culture     |
| force alliances and collaborations                    |                    |
| management of and resistance to change                |                    |
| cultural approach (police culture)                    |                    |
| pressure for success by leadership                    |                    |
| effective leadership and management at a senior level |                    |
|   |                    |
| language used   | Police language    |
|   |                    |
| trust and confidence in police                        | Procedural justice |
| organisational learning                               |                    |
| reputational issues for police                        |                    |

Table 11: amalgamated and removed codes divided into the new three analytical frames

These codes, which could not be incorporated into the investigative cycle framework, have now been organised under the three thematic elements of police culture, police language, and procedural justice. While presented in separate sections of the chapter, it is important to emphasise that these elements overlap and intersect being incorporated into the over-arching, super-ordinate codes of ‘experiential – cultural’, ‘dilemmas: ethical, procedural and legal’ and ‘structural sanctification’ from the final coding (see Appendix J vii). These elements have provided separate lenses for brief analyses that are presented in this chapter in the same order.

## 5.2 Police culture

A very brief introduction to police culture was provided in Chapter Four, Part One in the ‘The role of the police’ sub-section (p. 86) when two respondents set out views demonstrating that changes in politics and policies do not always lead to changes in attitudes or behaviours with the police *métier* predominating. Underpinning the police *métier* is the police occupational culture, sometimes referred to as the police organisational culture or police sub-culture and explained by Brogden *et al.* (1988) as *cop culture*: ‘an uncovering of the rules,

norms and values which construct and guide the attitudes and behaviours of police officers' (1988, p. 30). The authors use a symbolic interactionist approach following work associated with Mead (1934) to describe a micro-sociology of policework where,

'personality then becomes role performance, attitudes become socially constructed responses to situations rather than individual predispositions, and the ultimate behaviour produced becomes an activity better understood by reference to the social processes which encourage the production and reproduction of this behaviour' (1988, p. 30).

Police culture was exposed in Chan's (1997) Australian examination of a failed attempt to address institutionalised racism in the police of New South Wales; racism now a subject close to the heart of every police force across the western world following the murder of George Floyd by a Minneapolis police officer. Police sub-culture equips an officer with a distinct 'working personality' according to Skolnick (1966) whose work is described by Bowling *et al.* (2019) as the *locus classicus* for discussing core police culture. The essential features of which are mission-action-cynicism-pessimism, suspicion, isolation/ solidarity, conservatism, machismo, racial prejudice and pragmatism. For a fuller description of these themes and cop culture in general see, for example, Brogden *et al.* 1988, Chapter 3; Chan (1997) and Bowling *et al.* 2019, Chapter 8.

Three of the features: mission-action-cynicism-pessimism, isolation/solidarity and machismo can be observed in the participants' responses during the interviews and all are considered to have an impact on (in)visibility in the police response to missing persons as will be seen in this section. I have combined some issues relating to the way in which police forces are organised according to geography, communities, populations and resources into these three features as these issues may have the tendency accentuate the features of cop culture, particularly around the sense of geographic and resource isolation/solidarity as more and more police forces join together to form alliances and partnerships. The way in which police forces are organised appears to have a direct relationship with the sense of (in)visibility around missing persons.

Also considered for this part of the analysis were organisational, political and legal cultures deriving from the common law underpinnings of the United

Kingdom's legislative framework in contrast to the civil and codified basis for most of European law. However, there was insufficient evidence from the research participants to justify an additional discussion.

#### 5.2.1 Mission-action-cynicism-pessimism

In keeping with mission and action as characteristics of police culture, three of the respondents (Chas – an experienced PolSA, Frederick – a new partnerships inspector and Keith – a seasoned response officer and now Prevent officer) talked through perceived pressures for success by 'leadership' in missing episodes. By leadership, the respondents were referring to senior leadership or management teams at a local command unit level. As part of their mission orientation, the police, more than other public authorities, possess a 'can do' culture and being solutions orientated, the pressure for results is most often seen in relation to crime reduction, crime detections and people brought to justice. Noting at the same time, that there is an increasing discourse around harm reduction within some areas of policing and it is interesting to see performance pressure applying to missing persons cases as well. Concurrently, missing persons' cases are seen as problematic for the police and as a risky business to be avoided if possible and clearing up or resolving missing persons' cases quickly relieves pressure on the police. Frederick points to the priority assigned to missing persons and the risks involved,

"... (missing people) have **a confusing priority** ... There is an **acutely cultural approach** ... they (missing people) are potentially **a piece of work where you can get into trouble**. So, I guess that people understand there's a risk to individual missing people but also, very importantly, **risk to your job**, as it were, so that underpins quite a lot of the work that goes on." [Frederick]

Cynicism and pessimism are never far from the surface in most police work, including missing persons with Neil commenting on the ability of police staff to manage investigations. I have already commented on the divide between sworn officers and unsworn staff members with officers often suggesting that staff members are somehow inferior in capability in comparison with officers. I suggest that some officers express anachronistic views that appear at odds with modern policing and mixed economies of workforce perhaps driven by the cynicism (and conservatism, see later in this section) identified in police culture as can be seen in comments made by Chas (an experienced PolSA),



“... I've never really agreed with the MRU [management and resource unit] dealing with missing people because **quite a lot of the staff there are, are police staff or they are PCSOs**. They're **not actually officers** who, sort of, have dealt with missing persons investigations before. So sometimes, the wheel's come off ... I think that we are still **very risk averse**, err, we still do too many enquiries for medium and low risk missing people, err, **just to cover our backsides** when they are investigating the cases.”  
[Chas]

In the same vein, Chas describes police forces as lacking innovation and merely copying each other's ideas, policies and protocols while Eric (a safeguarding team manager) expresses a view that can be seen as pessimistic when describing 'missing' as a business or service area in policing when talking through the tendency of information technology systems to lead a business rather than support it,

“I think forces need to have, I think, for too long missing has been the Cinderella, missing has been, **the missing agenda has been the Cinderella of policing**. It has got better but I still think there's a long way to go in terms of missing people are found by doing police work, by people not by IT systems ...” [Eric]

Eric uses the expression 'Cinderella' to indicate that missing has been a poorly resourced, often neglected policing service that historically has been under-funded. It is interesting to see opposing and less cynical or pessimistic views expressed by other respondents as Keith says when setting out his views on policing vulnerabilities,

“So it's a whole new concept [Prevent] ... it's neighbourhood policing re-branded really with more **emphasis around threat, risk and harm** ... it's about **who is causing us the most grief**, let's put our resources there, **purely because of numbers and budgets**, isn't it.” [Keith]

The idea that police should focus on vulnerability has already been addressed in Chapter Four, Part Two and while this transition from a crime control ethos may be seen clearly in British policing, Frederick suggests otherwise in his comment,

“It feels like **we end up dealing with social problems by way of a reactive police response** as opposed to a proactive, prevention and intervention approach.” [Frederick]

The notion that the police should morph into putative social workers is rejected by Redmond (2019) who argues that the drugs crisis in America has allowed the police to occupy another space in which to expand power, embedding

themselves in the private lives of drug users. Redmond problematises this occupation, calling for a critical analysis of the encroachment of policing into the territory of the social worker. She opposes the occupation as it disguises ‘the continuing, large-scale criminalization of marginalized drug users, and obscures chronic underinvestment in non-carceral systems of care’ (Redmond, 2019, p. 2).

### 5.2.2 Isolation/Solidarity

Acknowledging that the sense of isolation in the police culture literature is about being isolated from communities and the rest of society because of the nature of the role performed by the police, I have used isolation/solidarity in an slightly different context. None of the respondents can be seen to reference isolation/solidarity specifically although the way in which police forces have organised themselves, in conjunction with neighbouring police forces, appears to create a feeling of isolation for many of the participants. Bryan (a long term PolSA and rural district inspector) described how tri-force arrangements have led to resources being pulled into large urban areas leaving the more rural parts of the three police forces exposed from a resourcing perspective. He pointed to one, mainly urban, side of his police force being well serviced and the other, largely rural side lacking in resources with huge distances between stations and therefore for deployments leading to an acute sense of isolation. These views are complemented by Chas’ opinions, who argues that,

“... [the] pulling of CSIs, PolSAs, firearms response into other force areas which **depletes resource availability**. At ground level none of the three forces is happy with current arrangements. We **don’t have a system that can be shared** across the three forces.” [Chas]

Contrary views were also presented with Dave (an experienced PolSA) describing a different tri-force arrangement, with joint protective services, in a very positive way, “... pretty much a fourth police force that sits alongside the other three forces.”

Four of the respondents discussed the gulf between the expectations of senior management and the reality of delivery of services on the ground, again leading to a sense of isolation/solidarity but this time internalised as an ‘us’ (the officers working ‘at the coalface’) and ‘them’ (senior officers supposedly directing

operations). This links to the classic work of Reuss-Ianni (1983) on the competition between street cops and ‘bosses’ which lies at the core of an organisational dilemma for policing. She argues that the new ‘management cop culture’ is bureaucratically juxtaposed to the precinct level ‘street cop culture’ in an American study. Her analysis demonstrated that the loyalty of bosses to the social and political networks of management cops rather than to the men on the street caused a pointed division with severe consequences for policing departments. In British policing, this gulf was more physically observable when constables and sergeants wore blue shirts and the senior officers wore white shirts and is best expressed by Frederick,

“There’s a **real disconnect between expectations and mainly capacity**. ... There’s a disconnect between the **expectations of senior executive staff and the ability to, sort of, deliver** that. ... There’s a keen acceptance of where we can move forward and improve but there’s keen acceptance that policing areas have not got the resources to, in fact all the policing areas, and operational staff and middle managers are trying to do that, **trying to do a lot with too little resources** to do that. There is **little prioritisation**. ... It’s an **organisation-wide problem ... not particular to missing people**, it’s a problem across policing.” [Frederick]

Senior management appear to be unable or unwilling to clarify what is realistic and what is not and this lack of clarity may bring with it an increased sense of isolation/solidarity, as Frederick goes on to explain, “... expectations in the public that we can’t meet and it does, also, create a lot of stress and difficulties for staff when prioritising their work.”

In keeping with the changing expectations of management and the translation of desired change at an operational level, five of the respondents pointed to the management of and the resistance to change. How change is accomplished in policing analysed by Björk (2018) in his work on the reform in the Swedish police where he identifies three principles or factors influencing how change can be achieved in bureaucratic organisations like the police. These are structural sanctification, job crafting and resilience, in part introduced in the conclusion of Chapter Four (p.182) and are ever-present in the police sub-culture.

As already stated, Merton’s view of structural sanctification (1940, p.564 cited in Björk, 2018) and adapted in Waddington’s analysis points to the primary nature of rigid regulations and the application of policy and procedure (Waddington,

2013, pp. 7–10) which as I have already suggested leads to roboticism in the conduct of police work and is evident in the police response to missing persons.

Job-crafting, in a police context, is about the actions officers take to define, shape and create their own roles much of which can be linked to the level of discretion that street officers have in the conduct of their duties. The effect that job crafting has can be seen in the implementation of new missing persons units when little direction was given by a command team about what and how the new team should operate leading to variations in services across police forces. These variations in business models and service delivery are reported on in many of the participants responses. See for example, these statements by Heidi discussing a fully developed model, Eric who describes a developing structure and Chas who talks through a different style of response to missing using a resolution unit for the majority of cases,

“... we have **child sexual exploitation unit, missing persons’ team**, which is us. You’ve also got a **sexual offences’ team and a rape victim’s unit**, and **the multi-agency safeguarding hub**.” [Heidi]

“**It’s not that well-developed**, so it’s ... just children’s services here. We haven’t got all the other agencies here so effectively we are not [a multi-agency safeguarding hub or MASH]. **We are co-located with, one step towards a full MASH and we only deal with children**.” [Eric]

“... **the MRU** [management and resolution unit] **was created about a year ago to reduce demand** on the frontline ... So, it’s just finished its pilot here in, and **now it’s fully running across the three divisions**.” [Chas]

In discussing an evaluation of his police force’s dedicated missing persons’ investigation unit (known locally as a ‘Locate’ team), Frederick commented on the inability to change strategic direction quickly and adopt a different working model,

“... I think it’s [the Locate team is] due to continue ... **it’s too big and too public, internally it’s too big an issue for the force to be able to back down on so quickly**.” [Frederick]

Associated with both structural sanctification and job-crafting is the third factor, ‘resilience’ which is seen rooted in practical knowledge and the reconstruction of good practices. Here officers rely on what they know to be effective in terms of policing practice and seek to preserve these methods in the face of change.

Arguments around policing priorities and how to effect change at the frontline are still being had now as the focus of elected police commissioners changes to match public expectations of policing. Tough decisions must be made as it is not possible to do all the is being asked of policing by the public, by politicians and by campaign groups. As an example of the need to restrict policing services, a speech by Sara Thornton (then chair of the National Police Chiefs' Council) to the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners attracted the headline, 'Misogyny should not be treated as a hate crime' (Dearden, 2018). Thornton was arguing that dealing with misogyny and misandry caused policing to be unnecessarily distorted as police forces were already stretched and struggling to cope with demand. Similar announcements on the restriction on the policing of non-recent child sexual abuse offences have been analysed by Maslen and Paine (2019) and have drawn criticism from various victim support groups.

Despite the usual interpretation of isolation in police culture as being isolation from communities, I have demonstrated that isolation is also created by internal divisions caused by organisational structures as well as the gulf between management and the front line exacerbated by a failure to meet public expectations and work stress emanating from the prioritisation of work by leadership teams.

### 5.2.3 Machismo

This feature of sub-culture would look to place a value on types of police work, for example, it might place a negative value on investigating missing persons as it is not 'crime-fighting machismo' or 'blue centurion, moral crusader' work in comparison with other police work which involves chasing villains and bringing offenders to justice (Bowling *et al.* 2019). Across the interviews, none of the participants provided evidence to suggest that machismo played a part in the police response to missing persons, on the contrary, many of the respondents placed a high value on protecting the vulnerable, and saw their work as key in enabling safer communities which in turn can assist in the reduction of crime as well as missing persons. The best response was provided by Keith based on his new role as a Prevent officer, who understood the 'broken windows' theory by Wilson and Kelling (1982), when talking through action on referrals to social services for young missing people,

“Their [social services] threshold to step in is really high, isn't it, yea? When perhaps you could argue **if you stepped in**, it's a bit like the idea around crime, that if you put things in, it's because of resourcing, low-level crime goes up and it's recorded and filed at source, it's ludicrous because **if you get on top of someone's low-level offending**, you could argue that you can stop them becoming that major crime, that drug dealer, that really violent person, that member of an organised crime group. You know it's cause and effect, isn't it? ... so I'm given some freedom to work on projects and issues and **to draw in other agencies to help me tackle those problems** and, tell you the truth, it's **really, really rewarding** ...” [Keith]

Although much criticised for its effect of criminalising marginalised communities through excessive use of zero tolerance policing objectives, in its simplest application, broken windows theory underpins much of present-day neighbourhood policing. In the past, this type of ‘community policing’ was viewed as women’s work and McCarthy (2013) examines the role of female police officers in this field and its associated ‘soft’ policing activities such as diverting teenagers away from crime. In drawing attention to the literature on police culture, she reviews the regular contrast between the masculine style of policing, most often linked coercive crime fighting, with the more cooperative, problem-solving and compassionate style of police work. The second mode is suggested as creating legitimate structure within which female police officers can work and most often involves, *inter alia*, increasing trust and cooperation in communities which itself underpins procedural justice (see the last section in this chapter on p. 204).

Lastly in this section, I should highlight the effect of the ‘professionalisation of the police’ programme promoted by the College of Policing and the National Police Chiefs’ Council (see for example, Charman, 2017 Chapter 4; Lumsden, 2017 and Tong and Hallenberg, 2018) on the police response to vulnerability and to missing persons. The research participants did not refer to the impact the professionalisation agenda has had on their personal careers or their work but with pressure for the police in the United Kingdom to be better educated than their predecessors, it is suggested that the dominant police culture may be weakened by the education programmes in place; the divide between police work and social work in policing vulnerabilities should become less obvious with a direct impact on gendered policing culture. It is noted that police training overseas is often based in sociological theory: criminology and social work

theory which has an influence on occupational style and the approach to situations in comparison with the predominating crime-control policing style here in the United Kingdom (Tatnell, 2017 and 2018).

As policing shifts focus from crime control to managing vulnerability it is possible gendered policing culture should diminish, machismo should give way to a modern, confidently empathetic expression of maleness or 'simpatico' (borrowed from Spanish to describe the relationship between people who get along well together). It is likely that this transformation should be most evident in teams, such as missing persons' units, dedicated to a more social service and working in partnerships with social workers, educationalists and health professionals.

While officers who work in this field exhibit some but not all of the characteristics of classic police subculture literature, noting that this is heavily reliant on observations of patrol work, it is observed that the police culture is weakened and tends to be replaced by a genuine caring and thoughtful approach to policing missing persons.

In summary, police culture contributes to notions of (in)visibility in missing cases: pressures for success and unrealistic expectations of management cops should raise visibility. This is countered as *missing* is seen as problematic and risky by street cops who find it difficult to navigate changing priorities with one result being the over-criminalisation of people's social problems, including *missing*, a matter covered in a report by The Howard League (2017) on the over-criminalisation of children in care. Machismo in police culture presents itself as increasing invisibility through determining *missing* as perhaps outside of the role of the police balanced by dedicated vulnerabilities' investigation teams made up of mainly women officers who through their work provide counter notions of visibility.

The analysis will now move on to a discussion around the use of language by police and how jargon and other language used by the police may have an impact on the (in)visibility of missing people. As part of organisation cultures, separate language may be produced which may appear as an impenetrable or mystified language unavailable and not fully understandable to those outside of an organisation and the police are no different in this respect.

### 5.3 Police language

Previously, I have pointed to the work of Wayland (2015); Stephenson *et al.* (2013) and Stevenson and Woolnough (2016) on the way language is used in relationships between a family reporting a missing person and the police. Occasionally language use can cause breakdowns in these relationships, thus providing a context for (in)visibility (Apps, 2017). Hall (2014) acknowledges this in his revisiting of the dichotomy between the *polis* or public realm and the *oikos* or private sphere of the home and family. The potential for (in)visibility and particularly, for harm in a failure by the police and other caring services to recognise and respond to family concerns raised during and after an investigation into a missing episode, is ever present and can be compounded by the use of police jargon and the clumsy use of language .

While writing on intimidated witnesses, Fyfe explores the same issues of how an ‘official discourse’ differs from a ‘local discourse’ (2001, p. 129). The figure below borrows from this work translating terms used in witness intimidation to those used in *missing* as venues for the potential generation of (in)visibility generated in the discrepancies in language used by families and the police.

|                           | <b>Official discourse</b>      | <b>Local discourse</b>        |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <b>Focus</b>              | risks                          | actual events                 |
| <b>Social context</b>     | ‘misper’ (missing person)      | family member                 |
| <b>Spatial context</b>    | search parameters              | places (home & community)     |
| <b>Temporal context</b>   | short term                     | never ending                  |
| <b>Policy orientation</b> | prevention & public protection | justice, health & social care |

Table 12: Different discourses of missing (adapted from Fyfe, 2001)

When reading and re-reading and subsequently coding the interview scripts, the participants’ use of a discrete police language and set of jargon was immediately apparent. It is perhaps difficult for me to separate myself and to be entirely objective when analysing the data from the interviewees. Most of the language used appeared to me to be fairly ordinary and presented in such a way as to be understandable in an everyday context. There was however, much use made of jargon words, like ‘misper’ (as an abbreviation of the police term,



'missing person') and Edkins (2011) reminds us that missing persons are named people and not just a category of people as 'missing persons'. Also, expressions such as, 'male', 'female' (rather than a man or a woman, or a male person or a female person) and 'lifestyle choice' (used to describe a person who voluntarily absented themselves from a family home or work venue) were used through many of the interviews. The term 'commit suicide' was used extensively to describe anxious or depressed people who may be thinking of taking their own lives. The following quotes illustrate usage of these terms:

"It's got to a point now where 18 months ago, we looked at a number of other options, including moving over to Compact [a missing persons' case management system]... and that gathered some momentum and, in parallel with that, was looking at what Niche RMS [a records management system] could offer **in terms of managing misper enquiries**." [Bryan]

"Very early on we tried templates to say, right, this is **a suicidal male** - you do this, it's **suicidal female** - you do this, can't work, it doesn't work like that because there will be something about that person that is totally unique about that person and their circumstances." [Dave]

"Not always, it depends very much on the circumstances, each case will be different, won't it. So, for somebody who wants to be away, if **it's a lifestyle choice**, it's not going to be in their best interests, some say **they got a right to be left** alone." [Eric]

"... and there may be an issue with not recording or investigating cases where it's **a lifestyle choice**. And those initial reports to us have been marked off as **a lifestyle choice** where actually **very little has been done in terms of basic investigation and support for that person** it's been marked off as a **conscious decision and is safe and well as opposed to being missing**." [Eric]

"It's mixed, it depends on the vulnerability of the person, and their profile, and what the risk grading they get. If we think there are about **to commit suicide**, they will prioritise it ..." [Dave]

Using the term 'misper' may have the effect of diminishing a person, as in the expression, 'just another misper' which was used by a number of the respondents when talking about missing children, especially those missing from children's homes. It could be seen that the missing children did not really count as young people in whom the police should be interested or pay attention.

In my professional practice, when constructing a self-administered missing persons' report form in conjunction with Professor Fiona Gabbert in 2018, one of the first drafts of the form itself was erroneously entitled 'MISPER'. When circulated for the purposes of a consultation, there was strong criticism from both the charity, Missing People and family representatives over the use of the term as it reflected police jargon rather than encourage engagement with a family missing a loved one.

It is reasonable to point out that the terms, 'male' and 'female' are in general usage outside of policing perhaps promoted by their usage in a plethora of police-related dramas on television.

It can be seen, particularly in quotes from Eric, that police attention perhaps should not be afforded to the people being described. The first of the two quotes is about the use of publicity and the second is about whether any investigation should take place into the apparent missing episode. It could be said that a person who absents themselves voluntarily and other kinds of missing people, for example, women of colour or Indigenous people are undeserving of police attention (see, for example, Pratt, 2005), a subject covered in Chapter Four, Part Two, pp. 127-129. This has been highlighted by Charman (2018) who found that there was,

‘an enthusiasm for assisting victims of crime but within the context of culturally defined notions of what a ‘victim’ might constitute. By sharply delineating between ‘deserving’ and ‘undeserving’ victims of crime, police officers are contributing to the ‘diminishing status’ of certain potential victims through privileging certain identities over others’ (p. 1).

In relation to the use of the term, ‘commit suicide’, this draws on the common law crime of ‘self-murder’ in the mid-13th Century, but long before that suicide was condemned as a mortal sin in the eyes of the Church (Holt, 2011). England and Wales were two of the last countries in Europe to de-criminalise suicide in the 1961 Suicide Act so that those people who survived a suicide attempt would no longer be prosecuted. It follows then that the term has expired legal connotations and should no longer be used. It is no longer used in bereavement counselling and by suicide support organisations (O'Brien, 2020) with the preferred terms being ‘died by suicide’, ‘took their own life’, or ‘killed

themselves'. For an analysis of suicidal journeys in relation to missing person and a short history of the social phenomenon of suicide, see Stevenson (2016).

As it would be helpful to situate terms and language used by the police in missing persons, such as the term 'misper' in this discourse, in the context of other authors criticism of police language and jargon and the following brief section provides this context.

While not explicitly referencing police language, Parr and Stevenson (2014) focus on what families 'have to say about *witnessing* their family members' (p. 298, emphasis in original). The authors reference witnessing in two separate ways, firstly during the formal reporting of a missing family member to the police and secondly, in what they describe as 'witness talk', in which families consider the police as spending too little time engaging with families and listening to 'the character and personhood' of their missing loved one so that the police 'fail in being appropriately responsive to their witness talk' (p. 298). This may deny an opportunity to bring an absent person into the present (Sigvardsdotter, 2013).

That the police fail to respond effectively may be another manifestation of police culture, the sense of mission and machismo may override an officer's ability to engage with family feelings and, through the use of a more police, official language lead to increased invisibility of the missing person. By listening to families not only is the missing person's presence acknowledged but painful aspects of the loss for the family may be ameliorated (Parr and Stevenson, 2014, p. 310).

When researching the hope held by families of missing people, Wayland (2015) found that this fragile hope resides in a liminal space between acknowledging a person's permanent disappearances or loss and the hope that they may one day be found or return. She provides many examples when family hope was dented by the clumsy language used by the police in describing possibilities of what may have happened to a missing person. Many families described their experiences of how the nature and personality of a missing person can be diminished by the way in which attending officers spoke about them. In understanding the potential for the police to have an impact on the emotional wellbeing of the left behind, Wayland urges the police to tread lightly, to tread gently and to explore different ways of offering support that acknowledges the

significance of a family's unresolved loss (Boss, 1999). Edkins (2011) also points to the use of police and official language as a reductive tool in a 'politics of recognition' (p. 310); the use of language which may have the effect of reducing identity and therefore increasing a sense of invisibility for the missing person.

In a different context of an ethnographic study, Foster (1990) reveals the different language used by a local community steeped in criminality and the local police. For some members of the community criminal acts, of greater or lesser severity, are a way of life and lead the police to differentiate between the 'toe rags' and the 'tasty villains' according to the preferences of various families for petty crime or for violence in armed robbery and woundings.

Lastly in this section, I want to consider the language that is used to describe missing persons and investigation units dedicated to resolving cases across Europe as a variety of terminology is used. In Belgium and Spain, 'disparu' and 'desaparecidos' are used respectively in the titles of the teams as in Cellule de Personnes Disparues, part of the Police Fédérale of Belgium and Centro Nacional de Desaparecidos (CNDES), a joint Guardia Civil and Cuerpo Nacional de Policía service. Of course, this may be seen as a translation issue as both terms translate as 'disappeared' as well as 'missing'. In French, 'disparu' can translate as 'vanished' and 'gone entirely' but in English 'disappeared' brings with it political connotations and subtly different meanings. These issues of language are important as the investigation of missing persons is truly an international service and understanding linguistic and cultural differences can make the difference between a successful liaison and a disappointing and unwanted conclusion.

In Northern Ireland, 'the disappeared' are those who have been killed and secretly buried by the IRA during The Troubles (see the BBC documentary 'Spotlight on The Troubles: a secret history', 2019). The political association with the disappeared can be seen in Mexico through the Colectivo Solecito de Veracruz, a group of mothers in Mexico's gulf state of Veracruz organised to search for their missing loved ones in the face of criminal violence and state inactivity (see for example, Corcoran, 2018).

In Argentina, there are the Mothers and Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo (madres de plaza de mayo) who are advocating for answers to the tragedy and chaos during the 1970s: the kidnapping of their children and grandchildren by Argentina's brutal military dictatorship. For decades, questions have been shared by the families of up to 30,000 people 'disappeared' by the state during Argentina's 'Dirty War' (Blackmore, 2019).



Figure 12: Las Madres de Plaza de Mayo. Image courtesy of Daniel Garcia/AFP/Getty Images from <https://www.history.com/news/mothers-plaza-de-mayo-disappeared-children-dirty-war-argentina#&gid=ci0241428d80002494&pid=mothers-of-the-disappeared-getty-496009036>

In summary, the use of language is critical in policing missing persons and in building and maintaining relationships with the families of the missing. The tensions created the police using one set of language in contrast to the family using another are evident and can lead to the increased invisibility of the missing person. The use of inappropriate terminology and careless language by the police has the potential to alienate a family rather than cultivate trust and confidence in an investigation. In both national and international contexts, language may determine missing people's visibility within investigations and more politically in public space.

The chapter now moves on to consider an analysis from the perspective of procedural justice as I suggest that trust and confidence in the police in respect of missing persons' investigations may be enhanced by a procedural justice approach. This approach may also overcome issues created through the use of police language and jargon by the police in transactions and negotiations with families.

## 5.4 Procedural justice

In Chapter Four, Part Two (p. 133) I introduced the potential for a procedural justice approach to be useful when dealing with the families of missing people. This section elaborates on the procedural justice approach and produces both an analysis and discussion in relation to the use of the approach in policing *missing*. I see the approach as relevant to the theme of (in)visibility as it enhances the possibilities of revealing ‘how we know someone’ as well as understanding people and their actions.

There has been a recent emphasis on the need for ethical, rights-based approaches to policing and the recognition that procedurally fair treatment can enhance perceptions of police legitimacy. Now embedded in the code of ethics of most police forces are values such as fairness, integrity and respect. For the National Crime Agency these are presented using the acronym, FIRST in the table below.

|  |
|--|
| Flexibility - seeking continuous improvements to the way that we work, adapting to find solutions to difficult problems                  |
| Integrity - acting with the highest standards of integrity and professionalism   |
| Respect - treating everyone with dignity and respect, valuing diversity, working in partnership, and sharing knowledge and best practice |
| Serving the public - being proud to put the public interest at the centre of everything we do  |
| Transparency - being truthful, open and accountable for our actions  |

Table 13: FIRST – the NCA values (source: <https://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/who-we-are/our-people>)

However, what is less clear is the extent to and ways in which these values are routinely upheld, the complexities involved in upholding them and how well they are received by those in police encounters. There are challenges associated with operationalising and upholding procedural justice in practice and the potential dichotomy between policy promises and policy products on the ground (McBarnett, 1981 and Fyfe, 2016).

Procedural justice is founded on the four principles of participation ('voice'); neutrality; respect and trustworthiness, all of which have a direct impact on the quality of police decision-making; the quality of police treatment of the public (singular and community) and the legitimacy of the police (Aston, 2018).

Three themes related to procedural justice emerged from a reading of the interview scripts: trust and confidence in the police, organisational learning and reputational issues for the police. Six of the nine respondents talked about trust and confidence in the police as having a major impact on how they dealt with matters around missing persons from the initial report to the police, organising searches, being seen to be doing the right things in an investigation and managing the relationship between the police and a family missing a loved one.

Five of the participants discussed organisational learning from its positive aspects in producing good operational responses to incidents and crimes, including the police response to missing persons to its less positive aspects around failure to improve services and behaviours. One respondent suggested that innovation was lacking and that new ideas were merely borrowed from other police areas with little thought given to transferring new schemes into a different environment as projects were 'doomed to succeed'. Many commented that learning did not survive the passage of time due to local champions for change moving positions or other newer and perhaps more interesting projects coming on stream (for good examples of the management of learning, see Sparrow, 2016).

Reputational issues were raised by six respondents and these ranged from personal reputation and risks to individual officers through to organisational reputation where the reputation of the police force and senior management team was at risk from an unwarranted action or omission.

All the respondents in the three themed areas were talking from a perspective of missing persons rather than from a broader range of police activities and responsibilities and it is my contention that a procedural justice approach to missing persons would assist in managing family expectations and the wider relationship between the police and families of the missing.

As already set out in Chapter Four, ideas of justice, fairness and equality have been discussed since the inception of the 'new police' in 1829 with public

support being essential for effective policing (Emsley, 1983) and the three elements being at the heart of democratic policing (Bradford and Quinton, 2014).

Since the 1990s, fairness, being seen as impartiality, legitimacy, honesty, fair dealing and freedom from bias have all featured in procedural justice agenda (Tyler, 1990 and 2004). These five characteristics of fairness produce visible policing processes and actions countering other elements or themes identified as causing invisibility and for the purposes of this thesis, specifically invisibility in missing persons. As already stated in the introduction to this section, procedural justice is founded on the four principles of participation or voice (of the person in the encounter with the police), neutrality (a neutral position being adopted by the police), respect (by the police for the person in the encounter) and trustworthiness (of the police) which are reflected in the quality of decision-making by the police and the quality of treatment offered by the police leading to legitimacy of the police and their operations (Mazerolle *et al.*, 2013 and Grace, 2018).

A review of arguments in connection with procedural justice is produced by Charman (2017) who points to the start of the scholarly critique of policing in the 1970s where issues of legitimacy and consent filled police literature. While new managerialism with its focus on performance gained some dominance through the 1990s, foregrounded again now are issues of trust, legitimacy and co-operation (p. 29). In policing terms, procedural justice has its focus on the degree to which people believe that they have been treated with fairness and dignity during encounters with the police, both in terms of the encounter itself and in terms of the outcome of the encounter. Encounters may comprise the micro-level and contentious 'stop and search' through to less intrusive and more caring macro-level approaches adopted while policing vulnerabilities and communities.

For Tyler (1990) compliance with the police rests on two opposing opinions: on one hand there is the legal obligation to obey the police as a coercive force and on the other hand, is the recognition by the public that the police are the legitimate holders of state power. On the assumption that obeying the police is considered the right thing to do can result in an effective method of maintaining social order. For a fuller explication of trust, legitimacy and procedural justice



see, for example, Bradford and Jackson (2010); Mazerolle *et al.*, 2013; Bradford and Quinton (2015); Bradford and Myhill (2015); Murphy (2017) and in the context of police reform and organisational justice, Aston *et al.* (2019).

Translating or importing procedural justice into the *missing* environment may be seen as essential in terms of cooperation, satisfaction and, ultimately, perceptions of legitimacy. Australian research by Sargeant (2015) has shown that judgements about trust and efficacy lie more in localised encounters such as those occurring in a neighbourhood context, for example, encounters with families around missing persons, than the more abstract notions of obedience and obligations to obey.

While procedural justice matters were not referenced explicitly by any of the research participants, three provided responses suggesting awareness of the need for procedural justice when dealing with families of missing persons. On asking about the need for a psychological basis to specific question sets relating to return home interviews, Keith responded,

“Yes, definitely it needs to be **more psychological so that we can understand** that person’s behavioural patterns as opposed to a **police officer in uniform going and saying did you commit a crime?** Who were you with? Where did you go? Where you 2 miles from home or 5 miles? **This is no good.**” [Keith]

When probed further about this need, in terms of a more sensitive or nuanced presentation of the question set, Keith added,

“... you could argue as well that you’re just opening a can of worms, you could make it more psychologically sensitive, i.e. **asking the questions to try and work out the person’s psyche as to why they’re doing it** and then you could fill the form in, for the child referral ...” [Keith]

Keith’s statements are taken as a plea for a standardised approach to any question set used by the police in missing persons and there are many, from the initial risk assessment question set through the questions used in prevention interviews (formerly ‘safe and well’ checks) to the questions asked during return home interviews. New academic research is in progress to design on new question sets, underpinned by psychological principles, for risk questionnaires as well as return home interviews at University of Liverpool (Gabbert, 2019; Giles, 2020) and a self-administered missing person report form is being trialled in Tayside and south London (Gabbert *et al.*, 2020). A further self-administered

return home interview process for adults is in design at Goldsmiths College, University of London (Brouillard, 2019). Using pre-determined, psychology-based, question sets should promote a sense of openness and transparency in the process along with participation leading to trustworthiness; all of which should reduce invisibility in missing, encourage the revelation of essential facts and demonstrate the respect the police have for the missing person and their family. Moreover, the use of self-administered report forms gives the family a continuing and present voice during an investigation.

Bryan talked through a 'victim's contract' from his point of view as an experienced PoISA,

"Well I can only speak for myself, first of all. One of the things as a PoISA or an inspector leading it from patrol perspective, one of the things **I'm adamant about from the outset is that we set a victim contract effectively with the family** of the victim, rather the family of the missing person, the same thing that we do with crimes, antisocial behaviour updates nowadays, **we put a contract in place**, that we update the family on, at regular intervals. So, part of my advice is to set up that contract with the family from the outset. It doesn't have to be anything on paper, but **an understanding that we will update them**, Joe, at the beginning of every shift change, or every three hours or **whatever it is that manages the family's expectations best** and is, obviously, realistic for the officer as well and for that to be documented on the I-Trace as well just to manage the next-of-kin's expectations." [Bryan]

The idea of setting out a contract with a family in missing persons' cases is presented by Bryan as essential in terms of participation and trustworthiness: that the police can be trusted to do what is agreed with a family, especially in terms of regularity and timeliness of contact.

In discussions on publicity, the need to obtain permission from a family ahead of providing publicity and over-riding a family position, Eyda responded,

"I think it's more just if we were **to really explain to people and have a general understanding of why we do what we do I think we'd be criticised less in the long run**, you know, **rather than lacking in communication** and sometimes police **officers can fall foul of becoming quite robotic** ... but the majority of my time spent with people, I'll be having a general conversation, getting a general idea of who they are as people, who they are as a family, what their concerns are, are they genuine, is this normal behaviour, and **in that discussion by building that rapport I can normally explain the processes and they'd fully understand why we do things and why we**

**need to things** and I think if that the case across the board then I think we would, **we would have less issues ...**" [Eyda]

Here Eyda, as the only respondent to present an understanding of procedural justice and the reputational risks exposed by not adopting a procedural justice approach, talks through a number of issues directly relating participation, neutrality, respect and trustworthiness, the four cornerstones of procedural justice. At the same time, Eyda is clear on her rejection of a robotic approach (discussed in Chapter Four, Part One, 'Process-driven police work sub section, p. 113) and emphasises the rapport needed to facilitate relationship-building with a family. All the elements here are conducive to increasing the visibility of missing person, their identity and behaviours.

This section has argued the importance of a procedural justice approach in missing persons' episodes and investigations, particularly the emphasis of giving citizens a voice in encounters with the police. Drawing on work around self-administered report forms and return home questionnaires (see above in this section and in the section on 'Police language') these mechanisms can provide a family and a missing person on their return with a present voice in the investigation and enhance treating people with respect. In terms of the wider public community outside of a family, there is the element of being seen to do things which might enhance trust and confidence in the police by enrolling the community in searches and in completing house-to-house inquiries as was seen recently in the Noah Donohoe<sup>17</sup> case in Belfast. People from both Catholic and Protestant communities walked with the Donohoe family for a week on local searches until Noah's body was found.

It is important to build a strong relationship with a missing person's family and be transparent and trustworthy in the investigative process as strong contributors to the public's perceptions of the police as a legitimate source of authority who will take missing persons' cases seriously and sympathetically adding to the visibility of individual missing people.

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<sup>17</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-53218930>

## 5.5 Conclusion

The chapter has introduced some additional analytical concepts to highlight further elements of policing practice that contribute to the (in)visibility of missing people. Using the thematics of police culture, police language and lastly, procedural justice, the respondents' statements have been combined with a brief commentary promoting viewpoints which suggest the impact that the three elements may have on (in)visibility and missing persons.

As policing modifies its attention from a crime control model to one of policing vulnerability, police culture, as identified in the literature and based mainly on research into the attitudes of 'street cops', may similarly change. Geographic and administrative structures as well as internal divisions between management and the front line have the tendency to create (in)visibility in missing. I have set out how police culture and especially, the gendered masculine policing culture may be weakened and be first evident in specialist, multi-agency teams dealing with missing persons.

I have pointed to the criticality of language usage in policing missing persons and in building and maintaining relationships with the families of the missing. I have also referenced both national and international contexts where language may determine missing people's visibility within investigations and more politically in public discourse.

I have drawn attention to the importance of a procedural justice approach in missing persons' episodes and investigations, particularly the prominence of allowing citizen participation in investigative work through self-reporting mechanisms, community searches and other activities. A procedural justice approach will ameliorate the public's perceptions of the police as a legitimate source of authority. It has been demonstrated that it is possible for the first two elements, culture and language, to lead to increasing invisibility while the third element, procedural justice has the potential opposite effect and encourages visibility.

The thesis moves now onto the next chapter which sets out a brief summary of the whole thesis and provides some conclusions to my research. Also covered

in the chapter is a short section on identity, personhood and agency as one element of the conclusions drawn from the thesis.

## Chapter 6 - Summary and conclusions

*We are so accustomed to disguise ourselves to others that in the end, we become disguised to ourselves.* François de la Rochefoucauld<sup>18</sup>, 1613 - 1680

### 6.1 Introduction

A summary and conclusions to the thesis are given in this final chapter. In drawing on Edkins (2011 and 2019) the conclusion brings attention to personal (and not cultural) identity, personhood and agency as possible key factors in considerations around missing persons. Accepting that this is a highly complex area in social theory I use an academic description instead as ‘how we might make sense of ourselves’ (Rose, 2005). Identity is the qualities, beliefs, personality, looks and so on that make a person a unique human being; matters sometimes obscured and rendered invisible in policing practice and research. The fact that the identity of a person may never be truly known to a family or to the police is examined along with arguments around personhood. By personhood, I mean, the status of being a person and while defining personhood is a controversial subject in both philosophy and law, according to Taylor (1985) it is closely tied with legal and political concepts of citizenship, equality, and liberty. Agency, as a social science concept, can be described as the capacity of individuals to act with independence and make their own free choices. Agency and decision-making can be determined or limited by any number of factors, including social class, religion, gender, ethnicity, ability and so on (Barker, 2002). The ability to make free choices is critical in the missing persons’ phenomenon and crucial in understanding (in)visibility in missing.

This chapter draws on the above concepts while re-visiting my research questions and highlighting the main contributions of the research. The chapter presents potential implications for policy and practice and wider implications for theory as well as highlighting gaps in knowledge. A possible research agenda to guide future work in the field is also provided.

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<sup>18</sup> A French classical author of maxims and memoirs.

As a reminder, my overarching research objective was the exploration of the concept of '(in)visibility' in policing missing people. I designed three RQs as set out here:

- what is meant by (in)visibility in missing?
- what causes (in)visibility in missing?
- how does (in)visibility operate in missing and what is the impact?

## 6.2 How we make sense of ourselves

How we make sense of ourselves is a key factor in considerations around missing persons and, drawing on Edkins (2011 and 2019), is worthy of consideration in a discrete section of this conclusion. The concept of how we make sense of ourselves appears on numerous occasions throughout my thesis and related presentations (Apps, 2019ab). As I have indicated, the true identity of a person may never be truly known to a family or to the police for many reasons including how a person wishes to present or disguise themselves (Goffman, 1959) as well as family reluctance to reveal the truth about a person due to shame, embarrassment and guilt associated with the stigma of 'going missing'. Family reluctance concerning the revelation of 'skeletons in the cupboard' is a constant issue to be resolved during criminal investigations when 'victimology' is being considered and applies equally to missing persons' investigations as Chas (a long-serving PoISA) says,

"... **It's usually something that is dragged out in an investigation.** I, I need to know what, who they are and what they are like, is this episode part of their nature, is it an untoward event, or is it typical of what they do. Quite often, **the missing person reports don't, don't get to that issue.** They'll ask the question, tell me about Dave, tell me about John, what is he like, what his routine, you know, paint a picture of him that's really only someone who knows him very well will be able to understand. We don't really get those, **we don't really get the humanity side, we don't get 'the who is this person?'**". [Chas]

The impact on visibility of missing persons cannot be clearer than in these circumstances: the family not wishing to reveal a true identity or not knowing it and despite continued questioning of a family, the police find themselves still not knowing the (always impossible) 'truth' of the person that they are seeking.

If a person or personhood can be described as a person's status or more fully as, '... a being who has a sense of self, has a notion of the future and the past, can hold values, make choices; in short, can adopt life-plans' (Taylor, 1985, p. 97), then it is possible to see the impact on visibility as it means that a person is a being who can be addressed and who can reply, but only if they are present rather than absent. Does not being able to be addressed or to reply mean that a person is any less of a person? Does the act of reporting a person as missing to the police start to reduce their capacity to be a person? The reduction of people to police records was explicated in Chapter Four, 'The police recording process' sub-section (p. 109) and the recording of missing persons by the authorities is known to be a reductive process (Edkins, 2011) potentially leading to invisibility.

These issues are summed up well by Edkins as essential qualities of being a person and the concept of uncertainty is ever present,

'... the ambiguity of personhood itself, and the way in which we not only do not 'know' anyone else for certain – who they are or what they might do next – we do not even 'know' ourselves. Living with that unknowing, not trying to pin people down, define and characterise them, turns out to be an essential part of what it means to let a person be a 'person', not an object. In other words, incompleteness, insecurity and vulnerability are essential to personhood.' (Edkins, 2019, p.5)

We perhaps need to understand these tricky questions in the context of agency. Agency is related to the human capacity for self-determination and is affected by cognitive belief structures formed through personal experiences and individual perceptions of position, environment and culture. A child's sense of agency is often ignored because of the widespread belief that they are not capable of making rational decisions in the absence of guidance from an adult (Larkins, 2019). Children whose parents or carers suppress their freedom are likely to show signs of frustration and have trouble exploring their self-identity frequently leading to behavioural issues such as disobedience of authority figures and counter-control being exercised. Children will test boundaries in the hope that they can extend their agency and their sense of independence. Conflict, for example between parents and children, is often the result of disagreement on the extent of one's agency. In missing, this conflict, whether between children and carers or children and their parents, is often a driver for a missing episode and a determinant of visibility. Different interpretations of agency may be relevant in adulthood. In adult self-determined missing cases,



when a person has chosen to absent themselves from family and friends and wishes to be forgotten, it is considered that the missing person gains autonomy, but in other cases, particularly those involving children or patients in mental health care settings, it can be seen the agency is reduced or absent.

Identity, personhood and agency are not static, unchanging entities, they transform and are adapted over time with individual circumstances and especially as a consequence of 'life transitions' (Jindal-Snape, 2019) which have such an impact on individuals as well as those connected to them through families, carers and friend groups. Changes in any of the entities as well as experiencing life transitions with an accompanying inability to manage or cope can be considered as further drivers for missing episodes and causes of (in)visibility. In the context of policing practice, it is difficult for policies and procedures policing practice to be shaped around these complexities of human character and development. Despite much attention being placed on diversity impact assessments during policy design, policies tend to be a 'one size, fits all' and are unable to encompass the breadth and intricacies of individual selves.

### 6.3 Addressing research questions

The fundamental issues underlying missing people's identity and agency have been refracted in this thesis via a series of research questions, relating to one overarching research objective: the exploration of the concept of '(in)visibility' in policing missing people. I summarise below how the research has illuminated findings to these questions.

#### 6.3.1 What is meant by (in)visibility in missing?

For the purposes of this thesis, the dualism of invisibility – visibility is not intended as a binary concept: being visible is not a strict alternative to being invisible. Complete or full visibility should be seen at one end of a spectrum of (in)visibility with complete or full hiddenness occurring at the other end. Based on my literature review (Chapter Two), in between the ends of the spectrum lie many shades, patterns and explanations of (in)visibility. Invisibility is never complete, the impact or effect of the invisibility may always be seen, and even for completely visible things, there will be something unseen about them. The

term (in)visibility was chosen to represent this spectrum and the dynamic nature of the concept that underlies the purpose of the thesis.

In my literature review, I drew attention to the relationship and perceived similarity between two oppositions: presence-absence and visibility-invisibility. Both appear as possessing similar qualities or characteristics and drawing on linguistic markedness after Trubetzkoy and Jakobson (see Zhang and Tian, 2015) there is a widespread view that presence and visibility are marked as existing in the real world, ordered, understandable and to some extent preferred or privileged, with their companions unmarked, excluded and under-researched in comparison. Using an analogy with the opposition: light-shade, the unmarked shade may be seen to function as limiting the extent of light, showing its boundaries and in a reversal of markedness, shade is proposed as marked. Transferring the analogy to the opposition visibility-invisibility, I propose that the usual marked visibility is shaped, controlled, boundaried by invisibility and thus, in a reversal of markedness, invisibility is proposed as marked.

In the field of missing, (in)visibility can have three distinct meanings; each one generated by the actors involved: the person who goes missing, their family who, in most cases, reports them as missing to the authorities and the police who are charged with locating and safeguarding them. For the person who goes missing, (in)visibility means the degree to which they create a visible absence or an invisible presence through self-determined actions. For the family, (in)visibility takes on a slightly different meaning as the extent to which a family will go to protect itself from police or other scrutiny through stigma, shame, guilt and embarrassment as well as the extent to which a family will reveal itself to an investigation or through publicity, in a caring and earnest way, seeking to secure the return of a missing loved one. For the last of the actors, the police, (in)visibility is described as the extent to which people are made more or less visible or more or less invisible through the application of policing processes from an initial report of a missing person through a police investigation, including search and the issue of publicity, to the person's return to as normal a life as is possible through referrals for relevant support from partner providers.

### 6.3.2 What causes (in)visibility in missing?

The causes of (in)visibility will vary depending on who is involved. From the perspective of the person who goes missing, there is much relating to their (in)visibility that they can control, such as the act of going missing itself which starts to hide them from their family and those seeking to find them. A person may make plans to absent themselves from their routine lives or going missing may be an immediate result of a disagreement for a child. In both circumstances, the degree of self-determination they possess will aid or hinder their (in)visibility. (In)visibility is also caused by the degree of disguise or openness a person wishes to utilise in keeping a level of privacy or a level of open disclosure. In referring to Edkins (2011 and 2019), a person may not be known to their families or even to themselves such is their level of privacy or degree of ability to comprehend their own personhood and agency.

Families also cause (in)visibility and whether driven by shame, guilt or embarrassment, they often fail to engage well, at an early stage with a police investigation through a reticence to reveal family secrets; secrets which if told, may assist an investigation by allowing a full understanding of the missing person and the reasons for their absence. However, from the evidence of the research participants, the greatest causes of (in)visibility appear to be driven by the police themselves. Reasons provided by the interviewees and derived from an analysis of the data include:

- policing structures and organisational factors which may create structural uncertainty: an ever-changing field in which police force relationships with each other and resource allocations shift along with policing priorities all accommodating political changes and budgetary constraints. Concurrently, *missing* can shift in importance and may disappear as a priority. Linked to organisational factors is the lack of police knowledge of phenomenon of *missing* perhaps responsible for invisibility
- police occupational culture and the ever-present question, 'is missing persons police work or social work?' Should the police be the agency charged with finding missing people? This dilemma is both moral and legal; the police as part of the community should protect people as much as the community has the same public duty. At the same time, the police

have a legal duty of care to protect people (not in all circumstances but a usual duty of care to keep people safe)

- policing dilemmas can also be seen in a range of other situations: accepting or not a missing persons case report; in decisions to investigate fully or not; to use publicity or not; to forget (in the sense of the right to be forgotten) about a missing person or not
- the use of police language or jargon helps to mystify and disguise policing processes and when used in a clumsy and insensitive way can alienate a family during an investigation leading to loss of trust and confidence in the ability of the police to resolve a case
- the apparent strict adherence to process which controls any number of policing activities in missing investigation from the initial report, the use of computerised management systems, through risk assessments to lines of enquiry including search and publicity
- in search, levels of (in)visibility may be altered by the use of categorical data. While reasonably sophisticated, this type of data may not be sufficiently nuanced to provide the best guide to where a person may be based on their perceived or assessed status, for example, as a suicidal person or a person living with dementia
- in the provision of publicity, degrees of (in)visibility can fluctuate depending on a person's attractiveness as a media story or as a social media meme. It appears that less publicity opportunities are available for people of colour, especially women of colour. The more publicity provided can also create a situation where individual campaigns to find a missing person are obscured by the overwhelming publicity for missing people on Twitter, for example

A major conclusion to be drawn from the thesis is that when the responsibility of the police is to find and safeguard missing people, it is curious to see that so much of how the police go about the business of policing *missing* creates invisibility rather than producing sufficient visibility for the person to be revealed. This is perhaps corroborated in the data as police find around 45% of missing adults and around 30% of missing children with the remainder being found by family or carers or, and more likely returning of their own accord (NCA, 2020).

### 6.3.3 How best to understand the mechanisms of (in)visibility in missing?

The impact of the operation of (in)visibility varies considerably depending on the actors involved. For the missing person, the degree of invisibility created by their own actions or omissions, by their families and by the police is likely to dictate the duration of their missing episode. It may also dictate the level of harm to which they are exposed, and the degree of actual harm caused while absent. For someone intent on taking their own life, they may wish to be successful before they are reported as a missing person rather than being found and rescued. At the less risky end of missing, a person may wish to draw attention to themselves for the purposes of being recognised as someone in need of psychotherapeutic support and want to be found at an early stage.

The impact on the family can be considered differently. They may wish for the police to conduct a thorough investigation to reduce their distress while waiting for news and for a person to return home safe and sound. But their wishes may be dampened by actions taken by the missing person or by the police which create invisibility. Many adults go missing due to stresses at home or at work and their preferred option is not to return home but remain absent while they re-adjust their mental state. Even once returned, their rehabilitation can take some time due to blame and stigma (see 'Stigma, respectability and badges of honour' sub-section in Chapter Four, Part Three, p. 164). Families who are either self-driven and socially competent or are dissatisfied with the police conduct of an investigation may wish to promote a campaign to find their missing loved one using social media or organising community searches. A family's desperation to find a person is revealed in perhaps unusual and unhelpful ways from the viewpoint of the police (see the 'Publicity and media' and subsequent sub-sections in Chapter Four, Part Three, p. 149).

The impact on the police may start with decision-making processes about accepting a report or recording a case (see Chapter Four, Part Three, p. 109). It may be introduced with officer attitude towards missing in general or towards a family (see, for example 'Robotism' linked to strict procedural adherence in Chapter Four, Part Two, p. 113); it may be an inability to glean sufficient information from a family in the early stages of an investigation, information which may prove crucial to resolving a case (see the 'Identity, personhood and

the creation of invisibility' sub-section in Chapter Four, Part Two, p. 119).

Search may be hampered by the selection of an inappropriate category in which to place a missing person and related decisions around subsequent search parameter adoption (see, for example, 'The use of categorical information' in Chapter Four, Part Three, p. 141). The impact may also be observed in the use of police language and the lack of procedural justice in missing (see Chapter Five, p. 198 and p. 204 respectively).

Again, it was seen that the police are the actors most likely to create their own invisibility around a missing persons cases rather than be thwarted by actions of a missing person or a family missing a loved one. (In)visibility both hides and disguises as well as reveals people to be found by the police, either way is presents itself as problematic and, in some cases, unresolvable.

#### 6.4 Perennial problem analysis: wider significance and resonance in *missing*

Work conducted by the College of Policing (Sims, 2019) as an analysis of so-called perennial problems in policing reveal deep seated, essential causes for much that appears flawed in the police response to *missing*. It is interesting to compare the themes and key drivers of (in)visibility in policing missing persons to Gill Sims' diagnosis of underlying system issues in the identification and management of risk. Her slide on risk, reproduced below, draws together many of the themes identified in my own analysis. Particularly, she points to the failure to successfully identify and protect individuals at risk of harm being promoted, for example, by time pressures in which to conduct all necessary work; work-related stress; risk assessment processes seen as box ticking exercises; and, risk aversion and fear of blame resulting in everything becoming a priority. Much of Sim's diagnosis is picked up in my analysis and resonates in the investigation of missing persons: the issues that she identifies need to be tackled ahead of the symptoms in missing created by those same system issues.

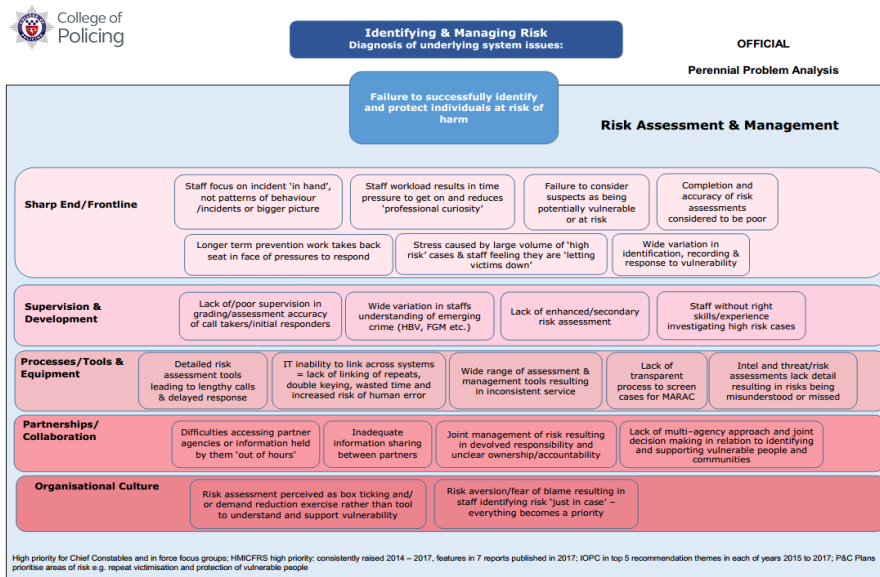


Figure 13: Identifying and managing risk (extract from Sims, G., 2019)

## 6.5 Potential implications for policy and practice

There appear to be many potential implications for policy and practice emanating from this thesis most of which are drawn from the conclusions to the analysis and discussion chapter (Chapter Four) and the thematic analysis chapter (Chapter Five). Solutions to the two systemic issues: what is the role of the police? and, is policing *missing*, police work? are enduring problems and, to some extent, beyond the scope of the thesis. The role of the police is bound up with structural uncertainty and dilemmas (by way of ever-changing police organisation structures and performance or delivery focus) and the perennial question of, 'is *missing* police work or social work?' needs a clear and unambiguous answer from policing and its partners. As a result of the research, I suggest the creation of a legal status or category of *missing* with associated legal responsibilities attached to various caring agencies and the police would ameliorate the situation bringing clarity for families reporting missing people to the police and assuring a defined policing response. Across Europe, police action in response to missing persons is codified in law (see, for example, the Spanish legal codes establishing the Centro Nationale de Desaparecidos<sup>19</sup>).

<sup>19</sup> A translated version of the legal functions of CNDES can be found at <https://cndes-web.ses.mir.es/publico/Desaparecidos/en/Nosotros>

Setting aside the two systemic issues, the main implication for how missing people may be made more visible in police investigations is the reduction of 'process' and an increase in intelligent and thoughtful responses to their missingness. By more visible, I mean how can people be seen as people-as-such with their identity, character and uniqueness preserved, rather than being subject to oppressive and obsessive processes of recording, risk assessment, categorisation, search and publicity? The everydayness of missing incidents may promote a blasé attitude in police officers especially in the completion of what many see as mundane administrative tasks. It is noted that strict procedural adherence and the associated observance of robotic behaviours are driven, in part, by policy and procedure design and, in part, by the use of technology systems for the recording of cases as well as being driven by an aversion to risk. The process-driven nature of policing missing persons should be subject to a review and be replaced by thoughtful and intelligent reactions governing all aspects of an enquiry from initial actions, through investigation, search and publicity to the return. This might reduce the risk of missing people becoming invisible in nuanced ways as a result of policing cultures and practice.

To expand on the apparent police aversion to risk, which appears as an ever-present factor in missing persons' investigations, reputational risk, both personal and organisational, together with work-related stress may lead to insufficient attention being paid to relevant cases as attention is overly focused on all cases. This may create the conditions for invisibility via policing mechanisms. Already in review at the time of writing is the categorisation of missing people. Suggestions to change or extend the labels of the categories from no apparent risk, low, medium and high risk to low, standard, raised and critical (Doyle, 2020) have been made in conjunction with removing the categories all together in favour of realising the risks present, acting accordingly and conducting necessary and proportionate investigative lines of enquiry. Risk assessment and triage processes (known as 'levels of intervention' and is a determination of 'if and when' the police should respond to a missing person episode) are also in review at the time of writing between the NCA, NPCC and the College of Policing (NPCC, 2020).

Building on the issue of work-related stress, a key finding is that this stress seems to be connected to the expenditure of emotional labour when dealing



with complex and repetitive missing persons episodes. Two marked effects can be seen: firstly, the creation of a lack of involvement in the work area and secondly, and concurrently (in different officers), the creation of a willingness to be overly immersed in cases. Sharing this finding in guidance and training to officers may be a practice-led step in overcoming some of the (in)visibility created by work stress.

Lastly, as a result of the research I suggest there needs an acknowledgement of the impact that the police occupational culture and the use of specific (and potentially unhelpful) police language and jargon has on missing persons and the extent to which they are made visible and invisible in fairly equal proportions as a consequence. The trial of a procedural justice approach in the police response to missing persons may be a significant step forward in reducing the impact of culture and language.

#### 6.6 Wider implications for theory and highlighting gaps in knowledge

Throughout the thesis I have concentrated on a more practical emphasis than a theoretical stance thus a focus on policy and practice implications may be more beneficial than me suggesting implications for theory. However, bringing forward my proposition from earlier in this chapter that there are perceived similarities between the oppositions, presence-absence and visibility-invisibility, I want to build on arguments made by Sigvardsdotter (2013) and Meier *et al.* (2013) on 'presence as appearance' and on 'the importance of absence in the present'. Sigvardsdotter uses Arendtian theory to explore how politics occur in and via public spaces: the spaces in which people are organised for living. People must be able to see and speak to each other so that their commonalities and differences can be debated (p. 526). Sigvardsdotter quotes Arendt, who states, 'Without the capacity to appear in front of others and be recognized as an acting subject, one's presence is ineffectual ...' (p. 526). Here visibility is directly related to presence and the ability to take part in life's activities, 'to be recognised'. Conversely, invisibility is related to absence and an inability for life performance (including its politics). Drawing this notion into the field of missing may signify the lack of capacity for a missing person to take part in everyday life: they are absent, invisible and not part of a community or society. A *politics* of missing people may also be constrained in this logic.

Meier *et al.* (2013, p. 426) ask the question, 'What and who has to be absent and what and who is allowed to be present?' The authors assert that absence has a political dimension that is negotiated and challenged: there are continuing questions on the right to be present or absent. Asking questions about absence changes the focus from presence and produces a different kind of reality around power relations as previously considered inferior positions is instead, seen as superior. By paying attention to absence, an insight into the right to be present or absent may be obtained. For some people this is a choice, sometimes a Hobson's choice for those who cannot bear their current status or environment. The need to pay attention to absence, 'displays the inherent interwovenness of absence with present experiences' (*ibid*, p. 423). Again, in the realm of missing persons, the absence of a person deserves attention because it is associated with personal and family narratives or memories. As discussed previously, a person may be physically absent and thus invisible, but present and visible in the thoughts and memories of those left behind as well as being present in the form of objects of remembrance: photographs, possessions, scent and so on. In the words of Meier *et al.*,

'What is absent is remarked upon and gets its contemporary life in and through such sites and practices of representation ... It has to be emphasized that when we understand absence as something that arises in experience only, then that which is absent is different from that which is completely gone, erased from all memory and vanished without a trace' (p. 426).

In the mind of a family missing a person, this may be realised as ambiguous loss (Boss, 1999) or a void in the mind and memory that cannot be filled. Absence, like missing, is not a 'thing-in-itself', it is in relation to others (Parr and Fyfe, 2012) and a symptom of wider causal factors. This thesis responds to the need to make visible missing people's absence and to examine what happens when they are gone.

My work has brought policing processes and actions in the response to missing persons that are responsible for the creation of (in)visibility into the light. In a paradoxical way, it could be said that the processes and actions are themselves invisible, certainly to those outside of policing they are unseen and mystified,

and yet create invisibility and visibility in disproportionate fashion. In terms of difference, I have exposed a hidden world of police methods designed to find a missing person, but which instead have the potential to throw a veil of invisibility over them, with the consequence that they may be more difficult to find. I have drawn attention to the markedness of absence and invisibility for the person who is missing and for their families and proposed solutions in terms of police practice and research.

My thesis enhances and enriches the qualitative evidence base more often seen in social science disciplines rather than in policing studies, through understanding of not just policing practice from the perspective of individual officers, but also understanding of the wider institutional context in which policing is undertaken.

My unique contribution in this professional doctorate thesis has been enabled by my professional career in missing persons policy and investigations, my position as an expert and national lead and by my constant attention to positionality and reflexivity. My research has been undertaken as an 'insider' but appearing as an outsider and I advance a new methodological/positionality debate in the field of policing research, particularly in the area of expert status and the independent and neutral researcher. My expert status has also allowed the writing of an unusually comprehensive narrative complementing the analysis and discussion presented in Chapters Four and Five.

#### 6.7 A possible research agenda to guide future work

The field of missing persons is under-researched and in this final section I suggest ways to build from this research presented in this thesis:

- **Publicity and a politics of visibility:** There are huge concerns over digital footprints and legacies and the right to be forgotten, but also and importantly, over the effectiveness of publicity where virtually no research has been conducted. Understanding what is at stake for police, families and missing people is a distinct area of research development.
- **Risk and making visible how missing people matter:** the College of Policing has conducted research into risk in connection with the thirteen strands of vulnerability identified in policing (which include missing

persons) in preparation to publish a new 'risk guidelines' practice document (currently in consultation). Additional research work around the risk in connection with missing would be beneficial perhaps trialling new and innovative methods of managing risk, which recognises the person-as-such: the uniqueness and individuality of people.

- Police culture and invisible missing lives: an impact assessment of police culture on policing missing persons would also be beneficial to understand how occupation culture feeds into officer attitudes around missing persons. Further opportunities for training officers and engendering missing work as enquiries into individual people with life-stories that matter. Relatedly, asking 'how well can a person be known?' as both a philosophical and practical enquiry would be beneficial.
- Trust and confidence – is a procedural justice approach in missing persons suitable for some form of experimental trial to see if PJ enhances the police response? Enrolling families and former missing people into this evaluation would be a way of enabling reflexive policing research with implications for practice.

## 6.8 Final words: the essential contributions of the thesis

Since the start of academic collaborations between the then UK Missing Persons Bureau and the Geographies of Missing project (reported in Stevenson *et al.*, 2013) I have wanted to re-open my own academic career and this thesis is the result of more than twelve years' work in the field of missing persons. Over the last eight years and as a result of much collaborative research and my own studies, the research process has helped me to understand my job differently. Now, in the fore front of my mind are always three questions: where's the evidence to explain what works? what's the impact of this evidence and how can the evidence be translated to shape policy and design practice? In my job, I have ensured that the findings from the various pieces of research are embedded in all that the now UK Missing Persons Unit does in terms of its policy and operational practice responsibilities. The field of missing persons is still under-researched, and I recognise there is so much more to achieve in building an evidence base to underpin policy and practice.

The thesis enhances the qualitative evidence base by providing knowledge in relation to policing processes which create(in)visibility in *missing*. It identifies and explains (in)visibility and missing persons and challenges the paradoxical nature of the police response to missing persons, a response already shrouded in mystery from the public's perspective, which while designed to reveal a missing person to be found has perhaps the contrary effect of hiding or disguising a person making them more difficult to be located and safeguarded. I have brought attention to the markedness of absence; absence, like missing, is not a 'thing-in-itself', it is always in relation to others (Parr and Fyfe, 2012) and a symptom of wider causal factors. The thesis answers the need to make visible missing people's absence and to examine what happens when they are gone.

It is said that new knowledge, true knowledge is found at the boundaries and intersection of disciplines and my ambition has been to position the thesis as an interdisciplinary contribution in the field of policing studies with overlaps into social geography, sociology, psychology and other disciplines. As a result of my research, I advance a new methodological/ positionality debate in the field of policing research, particularly in the area of expert status and the independent and neutral researcher. I have drawn on a range of views and argument and my research blends philosophical sensibility and a pragmatic eye revealing what might work in the policing response to *missing*; in doing so, I have enhanced the politics of *missing*.

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(2016) Canterbury Christ Church University, Canterbury, 'Evidence-Based Policing: beyond the randomised controlled trial – stress in policing' conference, 22<sup>nd</sup> -23<sup>rd</sup> June.

- (2016) Scottish Institute of Policing Research, Edinburgh, International policing, 'Localism to globalism' conference, 10<sup>th</sup> November.
- (2016) College of Policing, Sunningdale, 'Vulnerability2016', annual conference, 30<sup>th</sup> November.
- (2016) College of Policing, Ryton, 'Licence to Practise' consultation focus group, 7<sup>th</sup> December.
- (2017) Leeds University and N8 Policing Research Partnership, Leeds, 'Policing futures: contexts, practices and debates', 7<sup>th</sup> June.
- (2017) Abertay University, Dundee, 'Third international conference on missing children and adults' conference, 14<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> June.
- (2017) Canterbury Christ Church University, Canterbury, 'Learning from evidence: mission impossible' conference, 21<sup>st</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup> June.
- (2017) Dundee Universities Postgraduate Policing Research Network Roundtable, Dundee, 'How can my research influence and inform policing? The challenges of engaging with policy and practice', 5<sup>th</sup> October.
- (2017) College of Policing, Ryton-on-Dunsmore, 'Everyday innovation: from ideas to action', annual conference, 23<sup>rd</sup> November.
- (2017) College of Policing, Ryton-on-Dunsmore, 'Police Knowledge Fund 1 - Showcase', 27<sup>th</sup> November.
- (2017) Scottish Institute of Policing Research, Edinburgh, 'Policing and professionalism: opportunities and challenges', Scottish International Policing Conference, 14<sup>th</sup> December.
- (2017) Scottish Institute of Policing Research, Edinburgh, 'Third SIPR/Police Scotland postgraduate student awards', 15<sup>th</sup> December.
- (2018) MacMillan Interactive Webinar, Desmond Thomas: 'Writing a PhD', 14<sup>th</sup> February.
- (2018) Research Student Forum (chair: Dr Ian Barron), University of Dundee, 14<sup>th</sup> February.
- (2018) WPC Software 'Compact', Metropolitan Police Service, Peel Centre, Hendon, 'National Missing Persons Conference', 18<sup>th</sup> January.

(2018) Scottish Institute of Policing Research / George Mason University International Summer School, George Mason University, Fairfax, Virginia, 18<sup>th</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup> June.

(2018) International Consortium on dementia and wayfinding, University of Edinburgh, 'Inaugural meeting', 3<sup>rd</sup> December.

(2018) Scottish Institute of Policing Research, Edinburgh, 'Fourth SIPR/Police Scotland postgraduate student awards', 3<sup>rd</sup> December.

(2018) Scottish Institute of Policing Research, Edinburgh, 'Policing and public health: opportunities and challenges', Scottish International Policing conference, 4<sup>th</sup> December.

(2018) Scottish Institute of Policing Research and the British Society of Criminology, University of the West of Scotland, Paisley, 'Procedural justice in policing: insights, complexities and future priorities', 5<sup>th</sup> December.

(2018) College of Policing, Ryton-on-Dunsmore, 'Recognising and responding to vulnerability-related risks: risk guidelines committee inaugural meeting', 11<sup>th</sup> October.

(2019) WPC Software 'Compact', Old Trafford Stadium, Manchester, 'National Missing Person Conference', 17<sup>th</sup> January.

(2019) International Consortium on dementia and wayfinding, University of Edinburgh, 'Two-day workshop', 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> March.

(2019) Research Student Forum (chair: Prof. Divya Jindal-Snape), University of Dundee, 17<sup>th</sup> April.

(2019) College of Policing, Ryton-on-Dunsmore, 'Recognising and responding to vulnerability-related risks: risk guidelines committee 1', 13<sup>th</sup> June.

(2019) University of Liverpool, Liverpool, 'Fourth international conference on missing children and adults: coming together' conference, 3<sup>rd</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> July.

(2019) College of Policing, Ryton-on-Dunsmore, 'Recognising and responding to vulnerability-related risks: risk guidelines committee 2', 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> October.

(2019) Research Student Forum (chair: Prof. Divya Jindal-Snape), University of Dundee, 17<sup>th</sup> April.

(2019) Global Law Enforcement and Public Health Association, 'Fifth International Conference', Edinburgh, 21<sup>st</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup> October.

(2019) School of Education and Social Work, 'Annual Research and Scholarship Conference', University of Dundee, 13<sup>th</sup> December.

(2020) WPC Software 'Compact', Hull City Hall, Hull, National Missing Persons Conference, 'Missing and Vulnerability', 29<sup>th</sup> January.

Supervision notes:

(2016) Supervision notes with Professor Nick Fyfe and Professor Hester Parr, University of Dundee, 2<sup>nd</sup> March.

(2016) Supervision with Professor Nick Fyfe, University of Dundee, 19<sup>th</sup> December.

(2017) Supervision notes with Professor Nick Fyfe and Dr Ann Hodson, University of Dundee, 21<sup>st</sup> February.

(2017) Supervision notes with Professor Nick Fyfe, University of Dundee, 7<sup>th</sup> March.

(2017) Supervision notes with Professor Nick Fyfe, University of Dundee, 14<sup>th</sup> July.

(2017) Supervision notes with Professor Hester Parr, University of Glasgow, 4<sup>th</sup> August.

(2017) Supervision notes with Professor Nick Fyfe and Dr Ann Hodson, University of Dundee, 15<sup>th</sup> August.

(2017) Supervision notes with Professor Nick Fyfe, University of Dundee, 6<sup>th</sup> September.

(2017) Supervision notes with Professor Nick Fyfe, Professor Hester Parr (University of Glasgow) and Dr Ann Hodson, University of Dundee, 5<sup>th</sup> October.

(2017) Supervision notes with Professor Nick Fyfe, Professor Hester Parr (University of Glasgow) and Dr Ann Hodson, University of Dundee, 13<sup>th</sup> November.

(2018) Supervision notes with Professor Nick Fyfe and Dr Ann Hodson, University of Dundee, 14<sup>th</sup> February.

(2018) Supervision notes with Professor Nick Fyfe and Professor Hester Parr, University of Dundee, 27<sup>th</sup> July.

(2018) Supervision notes with Professor Nick Fyfe and Professor Hester Parr, University of Dundee, 28<sup>th</sup> September.

(2018) Supervision notes with Professor Nick Fyfe and Professor Hester Parr, University of Dundee, 16<sup>th</sup> November.

(2018) Supervision notes with Professor Hester Parr, University of Dundee, 19<sup>th</sup> December.

(2019) Supervision notes with Professor Nick Fyfe, University of Dundee, 25<sup>th</sup> January.

(2019) Supervision notes with Professor Nick Fyfe and Professor Hester Parr, University of Dundee, 8<sup>th</sup> March.

(2019) Supervision notes with Professor Nick Fyfe and Professor Hester Parr, University of Dundee, 26<sup>th</sup> April.

(2019) Supervision notes with Professor Nick Fyfe and Professor Hester Parr, University of Dundee, 12<sup>th</sup> August.

(2019) Supervision notes with Professor Nick Fyfe and Professor Hester Parr (University of Glasgow), University of Dundee, 25<sup>th</sup> October.

(2019) Supervision notes with Professor Nick Fyfe, University of Dundee, 11<sup>th</sup> December.

(2020) Supervision notes with Professor Nick Fyfe and Professor Hester Parr (University of Glasgow), University of Dundee, 24<sup>th</sup> January.

(2020) Supervision notes with Professor Nick Fyfe and Professor Hester Parr, University of Dundee, 6<sup>th</sup> March.

(2020) Supervision notes with Professor Nick Fyfe and Professor Hester Parr, University of Dundee, 27<sup>th</sup> March.



(2020) Supervision notes with Professor Nick Fyfe and Professor Hester Parr, University of Dundee, 24<sup>th</sup> April.

(2020) Supervision notes with Professor Nick Fyfe and Professor Hester Parr, University of Dundee, 21<sup>st</sup> May.

(2020) Supervision notes with Professor Nick Fyfe and Professor Hester Parr, University of Dundee, 26<sup>th</sup> June.

(2020) Supervision notes with Professor Nick Fyfe and Professor Hester Parr, University of Dundee, 7<sup>th</sup> August.

## Appendix A

## Research questions and research grid

| RQs      | RM: Data  | RM: Data sources  | RM: Collection methods   | Data analysis | Time scales   | Problems (research and ethical)   |
|----------|---|---|--|---------------|---|---|
| As below | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>documents</li> <li>case studies</li> <li>interview responses</li> <li>questionnaire responses?</li> <li>focus groups responses?</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>police forces</li> <li>NGOs</li> <li>government departments</li> <li>cases and publicity/recorded cases/family narratives</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>documentary analysis</li> <li>interviews</li> <li>questionnaires?</li> <li>focus groups?</li> </ul> | NVivo?        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>mini literature review June-August</li> <li>data collection September-October</li> <li>analysis November-December</li> <li>write-up to sub date Mar</li> </ul> | <p>None anticipated – ethical approval to be sought from Uni Ethics Comm as necessary.</p> <p>No research problems anticipated. Need to consider access to case studies from police forces but as a qual. study may only need</p> |

General research objective: the exploration of the concept of '(in)visibility' in policing missing people and three specific RQs:

- what is meant by (in)visibility in missing?
- what causes (in)visibility in missing?
- how does (in)visibility operate in missing and what is the impact?

## Research project plan

### Context

A literature review entitled, '*Harm and missing persons: challenges to and opportunities for the measurement of harm*' explored how harm both causes and is caused by missing persons' episodes. Foregrounded in the review were aspects of invisibility for the missing persons themselves and the harm in *missing*. Missing persons and therefore harm in missing persons are (in)visible in a number of ways: in recording practices and how a state deals with missing persons, that is, in policies and operational practices; in publicity; in politics; in statistics; in international agreements; and, in research. How can aspects or characteristics of (in)visibility be explored? What is the impact of these characteristics of (in)visibility on *missing*?

This project has three parts: (1) it expands the literature review setting out *invisibility* as a concept and then draws it into policing and subsequently policing missing persons. An extended, short literature review would encompass a conceptual approach to invisibility which then develops into a police understanding of invisibility and then a police understanding of (in)visibility in missing, especially around the (in)visibility of harm. The review will be used as a framework for two pieces of research: (2) a shorter piece of 15,000 to 20,000 words around the police understanding of (in)visibility in *missing* conducted this year and early next; (3) the second study is longer, of between 30,000 and 40,000 words around returned missing people and family members who have experienced *missing* conducted between April 2018 and March 2020.

This could provide really interesting research in both a conceptual and practical way and would build well on Jennifer Ekins (2011) work, '*Missing: persons and politics*' (New York: Cornell University Press).

The overall project is a series of cases studies, as a collective or comparative case study, for the purposes of learning more about the phenomenon of missing persons, where the focus is both within and across the cases. The case study method gives a unitary character to the data being studied by interrelating a variety of facts to a single or multiple cases. It provides an opportunity for an

intensive analysis of many specific details which are often overlooked in other types of research.

### Rationale

My proposal is to conduct two separate but linked pieces of research to complete my professional doctorate. The first piece is intended to be a one-year project and the second piece, a two-year project. The ability to split up the three years of research is allowed in the post-graduate degree handbook. The professional doctorate is very flexible and allows for many variations of research (Ian Barron who oversees the PG programme is content with my proposal).

My rationale for completing the research years in this way is multi-fold. Firstly, and selfishly, I have not completed any research project personally for around twenty years. While I have assisted in a number of research projects and been a member of various research dissemination and research management groups, I have not conducted any research directly and I believe conducting a shorter and simpler piece as the first element will allow me to gain confidence as a post-graduate researcher ahead of a more complex and lengthy piece. Secondly, a phased approach to the two elements of research will enable the testing out of methods and concepts in the first piece before applying similar methods in the second piece. The second piece will enable the conceptual arguments and findings to be applied in real world research.

### The literature

Literature may be used in different ways in a qualitative study. According to Creswell (2014), it can be used to frame the problem in the introduction to the study; it may be presented in a separate section as a literature review; or, it may be presented at the end of a study as a basis for comparing and contrasting findings. To present the literature in a separate section, there must be a strong theoretical underpinning to the study, such as in ethnographies and critical theory studies. Presenting the literature at the end of study is common in qualitative designs, but is most often seen in association with grounded theory where comparisons and contrasts are made with other theories found in the

literature (p. 29). In this study, the available literature is being used to frame the problem as part of the introduction to the study.

The narratives around missing persons provide a way of discerning and understanding the tension between the way in which we see each other and the way in which forms of governance or political systems see us: the apparatus of government can be seen to reduce people to categories and numbers, rendering individuals invisible (Edkins, 2011).

Edkins makes a detailed study of missing persons using a narrative approach examining stories and anecdotes interwoven with analysis and explanation. She argues that a person is produced 'as an object of governance ... as something that has no voice, as disconnected ... (2011, p.viii). Someone who is made to be invisible.

Edkins also argues for a different kind of politics in which the person-as-such is recognised. This last point introduces the essence of the person and how we know a person. There is an aphorism used in the world of missing persons and wider policing, most often expressed as 'you don't really know someone, until you know them'. In Edkins words, 'It turns out that in some profound sense a person was in any case unknowable and unknown. And that who people are is very much bound up with who they are in relation to others' (2011, p. viii). It is not a particular characteristic of the person that is missed but 'something singular, something unfathomable. ... The person cannot be pinned down: the person is missing' (2011, p. ix). This inability to know someone contributes to their invisibility.

There is immediate evidence of invisibility driven by the politics that Edkins describes. Firstly, invisibility is created through the objectification of a missing person, the person is ascribed a number or reference and reduced to a description in a report, although it can be argued that this is necessary for accurate recording by the authorities. Invisibility is also created in the sense of not truly knowing a person; an anguish of not knowing who a person is in the fullest sense by not acknowledging or recognising their presence.

That people exist in relation to others is drawn out by Parr and Fyfe who also point to aspects of invisibility:

'A missing person has to be noticed as not inhabiting their rightful place in order to be termed *missing*. This missingness may be *attributed*: someone may be reported or noticed as *missing*, but *not* experience their own missingness or absence. *Missing* is immediately a problematic term, then, and one used mostly by 'the left behind'. *Missing* is indelibly relational – gone *missing*, being missed – it is always *in relation*' (2012, p. 617, italics in original).

Sparrow (2008) draws our attention to features of harm that make harm reduction and control strategies difficult; three of these features can apply to *missing*. Firstly, there is *invisibility*; harm in missing is invisible for a number of reasons. Jupp *et al.*, in writing about invisible crimes, describe features that contribute to invisibility, some of which read across to *missing* in a relatively convincing fashion: no knowledge; no statistics; no research; no politics (1999, Chapter 1). It might be better to use the word 'little' instead of 'no' in *missing*; there is limited but improving knowledge; statistics and data are imprecise and provide an incomplete picture of *missing*; in comparison with other subject matters, there is a paucity of research (Parr and Fyfe, 2012; Vo, 2015; Foy, 2016). *Missing* is defined so that it can be grasped or understood in a way by the police so that it can be reported, recorded and processed or investigated (Parr and Fyfe, 2012, p. 617). But the process of recording and managing *missing* introduces further opportunities to render people invisible.

*Missing journeys* are incredibly varied both in time and place. Police statistics (NCA, 2016) show that most missing events have a very short duration from a police viewpoint; most people return within 24 hours of being reported missing. However, the statistics disguise, and may render invisible, the real duration of *missing* and the realisation of duration from differing perspectives: of a missing person, themselves; of the family reporting; of the police; and of social, health and charitable care.

Research (for example, Stevenson *et al.*, 2013) and anecdotal evidence suggests that people take varying lengths of time to consider *going missing*. Young people may go missing on the spur of a moment after an argument at home while one adult is known to have thought about going missing to take his own life for two years before the actual event. While a police case of missing may be short, most are less than three days, the duration for other people and agencies can be very extended. A family may not report a person missing

immediately on noticing that someone is absent; this may occur for a number of reasons and includes hoping that the missing person will return quickly and not wanting to go to the authorities for assistance. When a person returns, it may take time for the person to reintegrate with family and friends, or in employment. The adult referred to above was only missing for three days but needed a year of family support and professional psychotherapy to recover to a reasonable state of health, making an overall *missing journey* time of three years.

On the geography of missing as a spatial dimension it is possible to consider a number of places. Helpfully, Davies *et al.* explore the various 'spaces' of invisibility and while written from the aspect of invisible crimes, their spatial descriptions transfer readily to *missing*: the body, the home, the urban street, the environment, the corporate suite, the state and virtual world (2014, Chapter 1). Places are also explored in Lynch's (1960) seminal text '*The image of the city*' in the context of paths, edges, districts, nodes and landmarks (Chapter 3).

With more than 242,000 missing person incidents recorded annually by the police in the United Kingdom alone (NCA, 2016) the sheer scale of *missing* disguises and can make invisible the nature of *missing*.

## Research design

### a) Why a case study?

Case studies form an example of the inductive logic of qualitative research and are found in many fields, especially evaluation, in which a researcher develops an in-depth analysis of a case or a collection of cases. Information is gathered by the researcher by way of field observations, interviews and narrative reports. The data obtained is analysed to form themes or categories from which broad patterns, generalisations or theories may be sought. Lastly, the researcher poses generalisations or theories from experiences and the literature (Creswell, 2014; Punch, 2014).

Stake (1994) distinguishes three main types of case study: the intrinsic case study, where the researcher undertakes the study to obtain a better understanding of a particular case; the instrumental case study, where an examination of a particular case provides an insight into an issue or assists in refining a theory; and the collective case study, largely an extended



instrumental study for the purposes of learning more about a phenomenon, population or a general condition. The collective case study is often referred to as the multiple case study or as the comparative case study as the focus is both within and across cases (pp. 236-247).

For Yin (2013) and Robson (2011) a case study is an empirical inquiry that also has three elements: an investigation of a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context when, the limits of the phenomenon and its context are not clearly seen, and in which evidence from multiple sources is used. According to a dictionary definition, 'the case study method gives a unitary character to the data being studied by interrelating a variety of facts to a single case. It also provides an opportunity for the intensive analysis of many specific details that are often overlooked by other methods' (Theodorson and Theodorson, 1969).

The characteristics of case studies are set out by Punch (2014). The case is a 'bounded system' and while as Yin points out the boundaries between the case and context may not be clearly evident, the researcher needs 'to identify and describe the boundaries of the case as clearly as possible' (p. 122). It is also important, in determining the unit of analysis, to identify what form the case takes (for example, this is a case of ...). Punch makes the point that there is an explicit attempt 'to preserve the wholeness, unity and integrity of the case' (2014, p. 122), but specific focus and within-case sampling may be required as not everything about the case can be studied. Carefully worded research questions assist in clarifying the focus.

In common with other types of qualitative research, there is the criticism that results of studies are not generalisable. Often generalisation is not the objective of case study research but for Punch (2014), the researcher may want to find something more broadly applicable. He argues that there are two main ways in which a case study can produce potentially generalisable results dependent on the purposes of the study and the way in which data is analysed. The first is by conceptualising rather than describing, the researcher is able to develop one or more new concepts to explain an aspect of the phenomenon being studied. The second is to develop propositions, or hypotheses about elements or factors within a case which can then be assessed for their more general application and transfer in other situations. In the inductive method of research, the propositions become outputs of the research (p. 123).

In areas, such as *missing*, where our knowledge is sparse, shallow, often fragmented and incomplete, case studies have a valuable contribution to make by constructing an in-depth understanding of a case. In new or problematic research area, only the case study can provide a full understanding of the important aspects of the area. As Punch (2014) puts it, 'Discovering important features, developing an understanding of them and conceptualising them for further study, is often best achieved through the case study strategy' (p. 124).

#### b) Framework for case study

It is intended to explore (in)visibility in missing using a six-point framework:

Statistical – unreported missing persons (c/f dark figure of crime), late reporting, recording issues, interpretation of a missing person's report, and, trust and confidence in the police. Also, to see how statistical collections and management information in connection with *missing* have an impact on (in)visibility.

Experiential – important places (c/g Geographies of Missing), experience of missing persons, duration of missing (by whom?), experiences of families (not wanting to expose the skeletons in the cupboard, not wanting such intrusive or intensive scrutiny of family affairs), structuring journeys, emotional resonance, navigating journeys, places (c/f Lynch's 1960 work – as a sub-framework: paths, edges, districts, nodes, landmarks, pp. 46-90), and places according to Davies *et al.* also as a sub-framework: the body, the home, the urban street, the environment, the corporate suite, the state and virtual world (2014, Chapter 1). Issues around police culture and police sociology are also present – need to consider how to reveal action of police culture/sociology. There is an obvious point to consider here too – all missing is invisible – invisible to family, invisible to the police. This issue links to how well you know someone. People hover between being present and being absent.

Categorical – the creation of categories (c/f Gibbs and Woolnough [2005] or Eales [2016]) for risk and response (c/f APP, etc.) can be seen as pigeon-holing people and sets of assumptions may flow from categorisation; bias may begin to operate immediately from categorisation. These are potentially unhelpful consequences and may create a sense of (in)visibility. On the other hand,

categories help to make sense of the world and, for the police, drive the allocation of resources.

Technologies 1 – social media and publicity considerations. Considerations around ‘right to be forgotten’ should be encompassed. How well can you keep secrets on line (c/f Wendy Moncur)? Online multiple identities, encrypted messaging, avatars, false personas and aliases all need to be considered.

Technologies 2 – the technical aspects of missing investigations, for example, open source searching and use of social media to trace people. Often a missing person can be seen (perhaps virtually via financial or communication data) but not found.

Language and culture – exploring how police language and jargon in the setting of police culture has an impact on (in)visibility.

#### c) Case sampling methodology or framework

Purposive sampling will be used (as the opposite of random sampling). Considerations need to be given to accessibility of data and data sources.

#### d) Recruitment

Research participants are being selected using a purposive sampling method. Participants will be selected through local work arrangements and contacts. Through the applicant’s job role as the manager of the MPB, he has access to police forces and police personnel employed in a number of positions: (1) missing persons’ strategic leads; (2) missing persons’ co-ordinators; (3) missing persons’ search officers; as well as (4) those conducting missing persons’ investigation as case officers and as (5) case supervision officers. Using telephone contacts as well as advertising a request for volunteer participants through POLKA (the Police On-Line Knowledge Area managed by the College of Policing), Twitter and the MPB website, research participants will be recruited. It is anticipated that at least two volunteer participants will be selected from each of the five categories of suggested participants above. All the participants will be based in the United Kingdom.

Case study documentary materials will be drawn from records held by MPB and by police forces. Only records capable of demonstrating elements of (in)visibility will be sought. Up to five cases are expected to be used. As MPB collects case

records and materials as part of its function and the applicant has access to police case files and materials, permission to use materials will be sought from individual police forces as relevant case are identified. No personal data is necessary for the research and none will be sought. Only anonymised material will be retained.

e) Timelines

- mini literature review September-October
- data collection October-November
- transcription time concurrent within data collection period and analysis
- analysis December-January
- write up February-March
- submission 15<sup>th</sup> March
- part 3 – starts April 2018 and concludes in March 2020.

f) Transcription

One day per one hour of interviews needed – no more than 12 interviews up to 1.5 hours each = 18 hours, therefore 18 days of transcription time needed. Preferred method is for immersion into transcripts.

g) Analysis

Using keywords and phrases. Identify keywords and phrases ahead of interviews and revise/refresh as necessary. Not suggested that NVivo would be used, much more likely to use sticky notes and highlighter. Scale of study is small, and with limited number of participants, lends itself to an uncomplicated analysis method.

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### **Semi-structured interviews guide to questions** (live version 20171024)

When you read the literature about ‘missing’, it can be seen that missing people are (in)visible or hidden and this interview is designed to explore your views about how (in)visible missing people are in a number of different contexts. Let me explain some more. You’ll know that up until quite recently domestic abuse and child sexual exploitation were hidden, in that they were not reported well or not recorded and investigated well by the police and other authorities. There’s the same issue now with modern slavery. It can be seen that missing people are hidden in different ways, aside from the obvious fact that they cannot be found. The interview, in five sections, will cover your role; the organisational and policy context of missing as a business area in policing; reporting and recording processes; investigations and the media. Your answers will help me understand what makes missing people visible and invisible.

#### Appendix A - Interview series 1:

The interviews are semi-structured, that is, conversational in style and will cover topics as follows:

A. Respondents role – I’m keen to learn about you and your role. Can you tell me briefly?

- About your current and previous roles?
- How long have you been in the police service?
- How long have you been in your current role?
- Can you now tell me about how your role relates to missing people?

For the rest of the interview, I’d like to ask you detailed questions which are centred around specific areas. I’ll explain as we go along.

B. (In)visibility in an organisational/policy context – we know about changing priorities in policing and a move to policing vulnerabilities. Here I’d like to

hear about your views on policing priorities and resourcing in relation to missing people.

- What sort of profile do missing people have within your organisation in relation to other policing priorities?
- How can this be seen? (How is this manifest?)
- How visible would you say *missing* is, as a policing or business area, within your police force?
- Do you think that missing people as an area of vulnerability gets the right level attention in relation to public concern?
- Do you think your police force allocates its resources for *missing* appropriately in relation to demand?
- [Does *missing* get its own performance regime or oversight?]
- Do you think any of your policies or procedures help or hinder maintaining a connection to people in preference to maintaining a police process?

C. (In)visibility in the police record/data environment – in this section, the questions are about the reporting and recording of missing people. Here I'd like you to think about unreported missing people (c/f dark figure of crime), recording issues, and the process of recording missing people. I'd like you to talk through this when answering the questions.

- Do you think there is a 'dark figure' of unreported missing people? Can you explain why please?
- When you are recording someone who is missing, how do you retain a connection to them as a person or their family?
- Do your recording processes take account of who a person is, their true selves?
- If not, what is recorded?
- Do you think that anything you do in the recording or management of a case may have the effect of increasing or decreasing the missing person's visibility?
- If you recognise that your actions may be causing how you see someone to change, do you do anything to counter the effect?

- How are outcomes recorded case management systems (in the data)?
- Do you think that long term cases maintain a 'presence' in the case management system (in the data)? How can you see that 'presence'? Or do they get 'forgotten' by officers not involved in the investigation]
- Do you use statistical collections or management information in your role?
- What is the impact of the weight of figures or data around missing people?
- Do you do anything to maintain a connection to 'the real person' in your presentation of data or figures in relation to missing? For example, do you stress that behind every figure and statistic is a real person and a family?

D. (In)visibility in the investigatory process – the questions here move onto your use of categorical information and data (for example, in risk assessments and in search formulation and parameters). The creation of categories can be seen as pigeon-holing people and sets of assumptions may flow from categorisation; bias may begin to operate immediately from categorisation. These are potentially unhelpful consequences and may create a sense of (in)visibility. On the other hand, categories help to make sense of the world and, for the police, drive the allocation of resources.

- Do you make use of categorical data or information in your job?
- How do you use it?
- Do you think that it is helpful in determining what a person might be like or who a person is?
- Why is that?
- Do you think of the effects of categorising someone who is missing? What might these effects be? Is it possible that someone might be reduced or disguised by categorising them?
- Do you think that anything you do in the investigation of a case may have the effect of increasing or decreasing the missing

person's visibility?

E. (In)visibility in the media – this set of questions is about your understanding of the impact of media and publicity in missing episodes and general public reporting of missing people.

- Do you use publicity in cases of missing people?
- Why do you use any publicity? Why don't you use publicity?
- Do you have a publicity strategy? Is it based on evidence? Or instinct/gut feeling?
- Do you consider any consents or authorities when providing publicity?
- Do you consider the impact of publicity on someone who is missing?
- Is the publicity in the best interests of someone who is missing or their family?
- How much attention do you pay to the 'right to be forgotten'?

F. [(In)visibility and the police discourse] – this part is about your understanding of how the use of language has an impact on policing *missing*. May not use this section at all – Hester suggests that this could be part of a discourse analysis that I could conduct as part of my own practice rather than a separate section of the interview

- Do you think that the use of police jargon in relation to missing people is helpful?
- Why is that?
- What sort of jargon is used? (eg. 'misper'; 'missing person', etc.)
- What impact do you think the use of language has on missing people or their families?
- Do you think that the use of language helps to maintain a true image of someone who is missing?
- Do you think you have a role in maintaining or sustaining a missing person's identity through your use of language?]



G. Gathering evidence

- Are there any data or reports that could be shared with me, relating to anything we have discussed so far, particularly in relation to missing people?
- Do you know of any evidence (EBP or other evidence) that might support ideas and views that we have discussed?
- Can you think of any legislation that covers any of the ideas or views that we have discussed?

H. Ending the interview

- Is there anything we have not covered that you would like to add?
- Is there anything in the interview you would prefer is not quoted?
- Are there other people you would recommend that I spoke to in relation to this study please? (snowballing)



## PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

### '(In)visibility in *missing*' project

Researcher: Joe Apps

Supervisors: Prof. Nick Fyfe and Dr. Ann Hodson, University of Dundee and Prof. Hester Parr, University of Glasgow

### INVITATION TO TAKE PART IN A RESEARCH STUDY

A literature review entitled, '*Harm and missing persons: challenges to and opportunities for the measurement of harm*' explored how harm both causes and is caused by missing persons' episodes. Foregrounded in the review were aspects of invisibility for the missing persons themselves and the harm in *missing*. Missing persons and therefore harm in missing persons are (in)visible in many ways: in recording practices and how a state deals with missing persons, that is, in policies and operational practices; in publicity; in politics; in statistics; in international agreements; and, in research. How can aspects or characteristics of (in)visibility be explored? What is the impact of these characteristics of (in)visibility on *missing*?

This project expands the literature review setting out *invisibility* as a concept and then draws it into policing and subsequently policing missing persons. A further short literature review encompasses a conceptual approach to invisibility which then develops into a police understanding of invisibility and then a police understanding of *(in)visibility* in missing, especially around the *(in)visibility* of harm. The review is used as a framework for a series of interviews and documentary analyses.

The interviews are semi-structured, that is, conversational in style and will cover the following topics:

- your experiences in the world of missing persons
- technical aspects to missing persons' investigations (for example, open source searching)
- statistical collections and management information
- the use of categorical information (for example, in risk assessments and in search formulation and parameters)
- the impact of media and publicity in missing episodes and general public reporting of missing persons.

The interview will also allow for your own points and agenda to emerge on this subject. A topic guide is attached as Appendix A.

### WHAT TO EXPECT

You are invited to have a one-to-one conversation with me, to talk in detail about the above issues that you think are important. This will be in a quiet room in a location that is convenient to you or by 'phone or by video conferencing (for example, inter-company VTC, Skype or Hangouts). The interview will take up to 60 minutes and we can pause or take a break as necessary. It may be necessary to follow up or conclude the interview in a second session which will be no longer than 30 minutes. I will be guided by you.

### TIME COMMITMENT

It is anticipated that interviews will last no longer than one hour. A further short interview may be needed.

### RECORDING OF INTERVIEW

The interview will be recorded using a digital recorder. I need to make sure you are happy with this. Recording the interview will save time taking notes and make sure I have an accurate record of what you have told me. I am not

collecting any personal data but would like to use quotations which I will anonymise. Let me know if there is anything you do not want to be included or quoted.

### COST, REIMBURSEMENT AND COMPENSATION

Participation in this research is voluntary.

### RISKS

There are no known risks for you in this study.

### TERMINATION OF PARTICIPATION

You may decide to stop being a part of the research study at any time without explanation and without penalty. If you withdraw from the study, the data collected from interviews with you will be deleted.

### CONFIDENTIALITY/ANONYMITY

The data being collected will not contain personal information. Any personal information known to me as the researcher will be fully anonymised. Data collected will be stored securely at the University of Dundee and at the conclusion of my degree, archived, again in a fully anonymised format at the UK Missing Persons Bureau. At the University, the data and materials will only be accessible to my supervisors and me (and the University IT Department). It will not be possible to identify research participants in any subsequently published works, conference abstracts and presentations, book chapters or journal articles.

### CONSENT

Your written consent will be needed before the interview and I would like you to sign a consent form. I'll also record your verbal consent at the beginning of any interview.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT THIS RESEARCH STUDY

Please contact Joe Apps at [g.apps@dundee.ac.uk](mailto:g.apps@dundee.ac.uk) or [joe.apps@nca.x.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:joe.apps@nca.x.gsi.gov.uk) (or by post at UK Missing persons Bureau, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Albert Day Building, Sunningdale Park, Larch Avenue, Ascot, Berkshire, SL5 0QE) if you would like further information about the study.

The University Research Ethics Committee of the University of Dundee has reviewed and approved this research study.

## Appendix E

## Documentation for School Research Ethics Committee

## Appendix E i

## University of Dundee

## Ethical Approval for Non-Clinical Research Involving Human Participants

## FORM B: Application for ethical approval for medium/high risk projects

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Name   | Graham (Joe) Apps  |
| School   | ESWCE  |
| University e-mail Address                          | g.apps@dundee.ac.uk  |
| Title of Project                                   | (In)visibility in <i>missing</i>   |
| Co-Investigators (with organisational affiliation) | n/a  |
| Projected Start Date                               | 25 <sup>th</sup> September, 2017   |
| Estimated End Date                                 | 1 <sup>st</sup> project submission 9 <sup>th</sup> March 2018 (with 2 <sup>nd</sup> project subject to further REC application in due course). |
| Funder (if applicable):                            | n/a  |

| Students Only                               |  |
|---|--|
| Name of Supervisors                         | Prof Nick Fyfe/Dr Ann Hodson (ext. Prof Hester Parr – University of Glasgow) |
| Degree (e.g. BA, BSc,, MA, MSc, MPhil, PhD) | PhD (Prof Doc)   |

## 1. Project Information

Please provide an overview over the research project providing a short explanation of the issues the project will address and why they are an important area of research.

*Please write this section in a way that is accessible to a person who is not an expert in your field.*

A literature review entitled, '*Harm and missing persons: challenges to and opportunities for the measurement of harm*' explored how harm both causes and is caused by missing persons' episodes. Foregrounded in the review were aspects of invisibility for the missing persons themselves and the harm in *missing*. Missing persons and therefore harm in missing persons are (in)visible in a number of ways: in recording practices and how a state deals with missing persons, that is, in policies and operational practices; in publicity; in politics; in statistics; in international agreements; and, in research. How can aspects or characteristics of (in)visibility be explored? What is the impact of these characteristics of (in)visibility on *missing*?

This project expands the literature review setting out *invisibility* as a concept and then draws it into policing and subsequently policing missing persons. This short literature review would encompass a conceptual approach to invisibility which then develops into a police understanding of invisibility and then a police understanding of (in)visibility in missing, especially around the (in)visibility of harm. The review will be used as a framework for a series of semi-structured interviews and documentary analysis. It is anticipated that the framework would be structured around the five elements comprising: experiential; media and publicity; technical; statistical and categorical.

This application is the first of two and covers a shorter research piece around the police understanding of (in)visibility in *missing* (to be followed by a longer piece with family members; this latter piece will be the subject of a further REC application in due course). A collective case study is proposed involving interview and documentary analysis. This could provide really interesting research in both a conceptual and practical way and would build well on Jennifer Edkins (2011) work, '*Missing: persons and politics*' (New York: Cornell University Press).

What are the aims and objectives of the project?

Overall, the project is intended to assess the evidence to describe and explain the operation of (in)visibility in *missing*. Specifically, the project is intended to describe what is meant by (in)visibility in *missing*; to describe the causes and characteristics of (in)visibility; to discover how aspects of (in)visibility in missing persons may be explored; and, to understand the operation and impact of (in)visibility in *missing*. Throughout the work, the main focus of (in)visibility will be on *missing harm*: the harm caused to a missing person, their family and friends and to those linked to the disappearance and potential return.

Please describe the design of your study and the research methods including information about any tasks or measuring instruments (validated or otherwise) that you will be using. *If you are using non-validated instruments (e.g., surveys or questionnaires you have designed, interview questions, observation protocols for ethnographic work or topic lists for unstructured data collection) please attach a copy to this ethics application.*

The overall project comprises two linked studies. The first is a shorter piece of 15,000 to 20,000 words conducted this year and early next. The second study is longer, of between 30,000 and 40,000 words, and conducted between April 2018 and March 2020.

The overall project is a series of cases studies, as a collective or comparative case study, for the purposes of learning more about the phenomenon of missing persons, where the focus is both within and across the cases. The case study method gives a unitary character to the data being studied by interrelating a variety of facts to a single or multiple cases. It provides an opportunity for an intensive analysis of many specific details which are often overlooked in other types of research.

The first study will be a qualitative study, based on grounded theory, involving a series of semi-structured interviews with police officers and those involved in policing missing persons as well as documentary analyses. The research will also be based on missing person case studies taken from police records and records held by the UK Missing Persons Bureau (MPB), part of the National Crime Agency (where the applicant works). An indicative question framework or topic guide is attached to this application as Appendix A.

## 2. Participants

|  | YES | NO |
|--|-----|----|
| Will your research involve children under the age of 18?   |     | X  |
| Will your research involve the recruitment of vulnerable participants (e.g., participants who are unable to consent or have a cognitive impairment or learning difficulties, prisoners or others in custodial care)? |     | X  |
| Will your research involve participants with communication difficulties, including difficulties arising from limited facility with the English language?   |     | X  |
| Will your research involve participants in unequal relationships with the researcher(s) (e.g., your own students)?   |     | X  |

Please explain in detail how you intend to recruit your participants considering particularly any issues arising from answering YES to any of these questions:

Research participants are being selected using a purposive sampling method. Participants will be selected through local work arrangements and contacts. Through the applicant's job role as the manager of the MPB, he has access to police forces and police personnel employed in a number of positions: (1) missing persons' strategic leads; (2) missing persons' co-ordinators; (3) missing persons' search officers; as well as (4) those conducting missing



persons' investigation as case officers and as (5) case supervision officers. Using telephone contacts as well as advertising a request for volunteer participants through POLKA (the Police On-Line Knowledge Area managed by the College of Policing), Twitter and the MPB website, research participants will be recruited. It is anticipated that at least two volunteer participants will be selected from each of the five categories of suggested participants above. All the participants will be based in the United Kingdom.

Case study documentary materials will be drawn from records held by MPB and by police forces. Only records capable of demonstrating elements of (in)visibility will be sought. Up to five cases are expected to be used. As MPB collects case records and materials as part of its function and the applicant has access to police case files and materials, permission to use materials will be sought from individual police forces as relevant case are identified. No personal data is necessary for the research and none will be sought. Only anonymised material will be retained.

### 3. Informed consent

|   | YES | NO |
|---|-----|----|
| Will all participants be fully informed why the project is being conducted and what their participation will involve, and will this information be given before the project begins? | X   |    |
| Will every participant be asked to give written consent to participation?   | X   |    |
| Will all participants be fully informed about what data will be collected, where and for how long it will be stored?  | X   |    |
| Will all participants be informed who has access to their data during the time it is stored?  | X   |    |
| Will explicit consent be sought for audio, video or photographic recording of participants?   | X   |    |
| Will every participant understand their right not to take part or to withdraw themselves and their data from the project without giving a reason and without penalty?               | X   |    |
| If the projects involve deception or covert observation of participants will you debrief them at the earliest possible opportunity?   | n/a |    |

If you answered YES to ALL of these questions please explain briefly how you will implement the informed consent scheme. Please attach copies of the participant information sheet(s) and consent form to your application.

Through the use of a completed (please see attached) participant information sheet, presented by email, in advance to each of the research participants. Also through a discussion on the contents of the participant information sheet with each of the participants directly ahead of each interview or encounter. Each of the research participants will be sent a copy of the consent form ahead of interviews/encounters and will be asked to read and sign the consent form on the day of the first interview/encounter. Note that some of the interviews are expected to take place remotely via MS Skype, Google Hangouts or telephone.

If you answered NO to ANY of these questions, please explain why it is necessary for the project to be conducted in a way that will not conform to the usual standards of informed consent (i.e., allow all participants the opportunity to exercise fully-informed consent). Please note that you can obtain consent by participation (e.g., in surveys or questionnaires) as a valid form of informed consent. If you plan to do this, you must explain this in the participant information sheet. Please attach (where applicable) copies of the participant information sheet and consent form to your application.

n/a

#### 4. Confidentiality, security and retention of research data

|  | YES | NO |
|--|-----|----|
| Are there any reasons why you cannot guarantee the full security and confidentiality of any personal or confidential data collected for the project?   |     | X  |
| Is there a possibility that any of your participants, organisations they are affiliated with, or people associated with them, could be directly or indirectly identified in the outputs from this project? |     | X  |
| Will any personal or confidential data be retained at the end of the project other than in fully anonymised form?  |     | X  |
| Will it be possible to link information or data back to individual participants in any way?  |     | X  |

If you have answered NO to ALL of these questions please explain how you will ensure the confidentiality and security of your research data both during and after the project. Please provide information on how long you will keep any data arising from the project.

Only anonymised data will be obtained as a result of interviews and the collection of case study materials. No personal or confidential data will be retained other than in fully anonymised form at the end of the project. It will not be possible to link information back to individual participants. Any data obtained as a result of the research will be stored in accordance with University protocols on the storage of research data, that is on University systems only or on encrypted drives whilst in transit from research 'sites' to the University systems. Encrypted drives will be wiped once data is on University systems. Data from the project will be kept until the full completion and award of my professional doctorate which is expected to conclude in March 2020. I intend to complete two research projects over the next three years; this is the first and is a one year (from March 2017) project ending with a research paper submission in March 2018.

If you have answered YES to ANY of these questions, please explain why it is necessary to breach normal ethical procedures regarding confidentiality, security and/or retention of research data.

n/a

## 5. Risk of harm

|   | YES | NO |
|---|-----|----|
| Is there a risk that the project may lead to physical discomfort or pain for the participants?  |     | X  |
| Is there a risk of emotional or psychological distress to participants?   |     | X  |
| Will tissue samples (including blood) be obtained from participants?  |     | X  |
| Will the research involve psychological intervention?   |     | X  |
| Will the research involve working with any substances and/or equipment which may be considered hazardous?                               |     | X  |
| Will any invasive or potentially harmful procedures of any kind be used (e.g., administration of drugs, placebos or other substances)?* |     | X  |
| Will the study involve discussion of sensitive or potentially sensitive topics (e.g., sexual activity, drug use, personal lives)?       |     | X  |

|   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| Is there a risk that the safety of the researcher may be compromised (e.g., lone working, working in potentially dangerous environments)? |  | X |
|---|--|---|

\* Note that research involving administration of drugs or other substances may require NHS REC approval.

If you answered YES to ANY of these questions, please explain the nature of the risks involved, why it is necessary to expose the participant or researcher to such risks, how you propose to assess, manage and mitigate the identified risks and how you plan to communicate the risks and your plans for mitigation to the participants. Please also explain the arrangements you will make to refer participants or researchers to sources of help or advice if they are distressed or harmed as a result of taking part in the project.

|     |
|-----|
| n/a |
|-----|

## 6. Risk of disclosure of harm or potential harm

|   | YES | NO |
|---|-----|----|
| Is there a risk that the study will lead participants to disclose evidence of previous criminal offences, or their intention to commit criminal offences? |     | X  |
| Is there a risk that the project will lead participants to disclose evidence that children or vulnerable adults are being harmed, or are at risk of harm? |     | X  |
| Is there a risk that the study will lead participants to disclose evidence of serious risk of other types of harm?  |     | X  |

If you have answered YES to ANY of these questions please explain why it is necessary to take the risk of potential or actual disclosure and what actions you would take if such disclosures were to occur. Please explain what advice you would take from whom before taking these actions and what information you will give participants about the possible consequences of disclosing such information.

|     |
|-----|
| n/a |
|-----|

## 7. Payment of participants

|   | YES | NO |
|---|-----|----|
| Do you intend to offer participants cash payments or any other kind of inducements for taking part in your project?                     |     | X  |
| Is there a possibility that such inducements will cause participants to consent to risks that they might not otherwise find acceptable? |     | X  |
| Is there any risk that the prospect of payment or other rewards will systematically skew the data?                                      |     | X  |
| Will you inform participants that accepting compensation or inducements does not negate their right to withdraw from the study?         |     | X  |

If you have answered YES to ANY of these questions, please explain the nature of the inducement or amount of payment you will offer and the reason why it is necessary to offer inducements. You should also explain why you consider it ethically and methodologically acceptable in the context of this study to offer such payments or other inducements.

n/a

## 8. Voluntary participation

|   | YES | NO |
|---|-----|----|
| Will you recruit students or employees of the University of Dundee or of organisations that are formally collaborators in the study and who will be in an unequal relationship with you or the researchers affiliated with the project? |     | X  |
| Will you recruit participants who are employees recruited through other businesses, voluntary or public sector organisations?   |     | X  |
| Will you recruit participants who are pupils or students recruited through educational institutions?  |     | X  |
| Will you recruit participants who are clients recruited through voluntary or public services?   |     | X  |
| Will you recruit participants who live in residential communities or institutions?  |     | X  |

|  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| Will you recruit participants who may not feel empowered to refuse to participate in the research? |  | X |
|--|--|---|

If you have answered YES to ANY of these questions please explain how your participants will be recruited and what steps you will take to ensure that participation in this project is genuinely voluntary.

|     |
|-----|
| n/a |
|-----|

By signing below I declare that I have read the University Code of Practice for non-clinical research on human participants and that my research abides by these guidelines.

Principal Investigator or student

Name                      G C Apps                      Date                      7<sup>th</sup> September, 2017

Supervisor (if applicable)

Name                      N R Fyfe                      Date                      7<sup>th</sup> September, 2017

## Appendix E ii

## University of Dundee

## Ethical Approval for Non-Clinical Research Involving Human Participants

## CHECKLIST 2: Is your project 'low' or 'medium' or 'high' risk?

(to be submitted together with the relevant application form)

| Questions   | YES | NO |
|---|-----|----|
| Will your research involve children under 18?   |     | X  |
| Will your research involve vulnerable participants (e.g., participants who are unable to consent or have a cognitive impairment or learning difficulties, prisoners or others in custodial care)? |     | X  |
| Will your research involve participants in unequal relationships with the researcher(s) (e.g. your own students)?   |     | X  |
| Will any invasive or potentially harmful procedures of any kind be used (e.g. administration of drugs, placebos or other substances*)?  |     | X  |
| Will tissue samples (including blood) be obtained from participants?  |     | X  |
| Is there a risk of physical discomfort or pain to participants?   |     | X  |
| Will the research involve working with any substances and/or equipment which may be considered hazardous?   |     | X  |
| Will the research involve psychological intervention?   |     | X  |
| Is there a risk of psychological or emotional distress to participants?   |     | X  |
| Is there a risk that participants may reveal previous, current or proposed illegal acts?  |     | X  |
| Will the study involve covert observation (i.e. participation without consent or knowledge at the time) and/or deception of any sort?   |     | X  |
| Will it be possible to link information or data back to individual participants in any way?   |     | X  |
| Will financial inducements (other than reasonable compensation for time or small rewards such as vouchers) be offered to participants?  |     | X  |
| Will the study involve discussion of sensitive or potentially sensitive topics (e.g. sexual activity, drug use, personal lives)?  |     | X  |
| Will the research involve access to data that requires permission from the appropriate authorities before use (e.g. data held by the police)?   | X   |    |
| Is there a risk that the safety of the researcher may be compromised (e.g. lone working, working in potentially dangerous environments)?  |     | X  |

\* Note that research involving administration of drugs or other substances may need NHS REC approval.

If you have answered **NO to ALL of these questions** please use **Form A** (low risk) to complete your application.

If you have answered **YES to ANY of these questions** please use **Form B** (medium/high risk) to complete your application.

Please submit this checklist with your application.





## Consent Form for '(In)visibility in *missing*' project

***Please tick the appropriate boxes***

**Yes**

### **Taking Part**

I have read and understood the project information sheet dated DD/MM/YYYY.

☐

I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project.

☐

I agree to take part in the project.

☐

I understand that my taking part is voluntary; I can withdraw from the study at any time and I do not have to give any reasons for why I no longer want to take part.

☐

I understand that my words may be quoted in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs (*if applicable; e.g. for interviews*).

☐

### **Use of the information I provide beyond this project**

I agree for the data I provide to be archived at the University of Dundee and UK Missing Persons Bureau.<sup>1</sup>

☐

I understand that other researchers will have access to this data only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form.

☐

I understand that other genuine researchers may use my words in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs, only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form.

☐

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---

|                     |           |           |
|---------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Name of participant | [printed] | Signature |
| Date                |           |           |

Project contact details for further information: Joe Apps [g.apps@dundee.ac.uk](mailto:g.apps@dundee.ac.uk) +44 (0)7710152399 and [joe.apps@nca.x.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:joe.apps@nca.x.gsi.gov.uk) +44 (0)1344 630556

Notes:

1. It is intended that all audio and video material, transcripts, etc. will be held at University of Dundee during the duration of the research and thesis production and afterwards at the UK Missing Persons Bureau.

### **Anonymised 'named' pen pictures of interview respondents**

Note scripts also entitled Script 1, 2, etc. Pilot interviews not transcribed.

#### Pilot Interview One:

Ellie - Operations officer working in a national unit providing support to police forces around missing persons. With ten years' experience of missing persons' casework, the respondent has made a significant contribution to missing persons' search and is connected with the missing persons' research agenda.

#### Pilot Interview Two:

Jennifer - Officer (sergeant) with nearly 20 years' experience, working in a mainly rural police force which is in an alliance with a neighbouring police force. Police force has significant problems in its large urban areas. The respondent is currently a neighbourhood team manager in a large urban area and a licensed search advisor (PoISA) with significant experience of all types of search. The respondent is also connected with the missing persons' research agenda.

#### Interview One:

Bryan - Police inspector serving as a district inspector in a predominately rural area in a divided geography police force which is in a tri-force collaboration. The respondent is a former PoISA who has made a significant contribution to the police force response to missing persons as well as national operational, major incident casework. Respondent has also acted as the police force missing persons' co-ordinator for a two-year period.

#### Interview Two:

Chas - Operations officer (sergeant) responsible for a safer neighbourhoods' team in a semi-rural area in a divided geography police force which is in a tri-

force collaboration. The respondent is also a licensed PoISA with five years' experience of search in a total of 20 years of policing. Responsible for missing persons search in the three-force area, the respondent has previously worked for five years covering border security duties in a busy port servicing the north of England.

#### Interview Three:

Dave - Operations officer (constable), based in joint protective services, in a small, non-metropolitan police force with some diverse populations in large urban areas. Police force is in a local collaboration with two adjoining police forces and respondent provides operational support, including as a trained PoISA in the tri-force districts. Officer has 20 years' experience including 8 years as a PoISA. Formerly a patrol and then firearms officer, of time spent on PoISA duties, around 80-90% is deployed on searches for missing persons.

#### Interview Four:

Eric - Former police officer now in a public protection role within a large, mainly rural, police force with intensive policing problems set largely in the area's major towns. Police force is in a local alliance with a neighbouring police force. Respondent has in excess of 30 years' experience, and contributes to the national policing agenda around missing persons.

#### Interview Five:

Frederick - Police chief inspector with 24 years' experience, currently a new partnership team manager in a large metropolitan police force. Respondent was previously a response inspector managing a large response team (the team responsible for answering all urgent calls for service in policing) as well as supporting the police force policy lead (as 'silver', setting tactics and ensuring operational activities conducted correctly) for missing persons. The respondent is connected with the missing persons' research agenda.

Interview Six:

Heidi - A public protection team manager in a large, mixed geographical police force. With significant policing problems in large urban areas, the police force is in an alliance with a neighbouring police force. Respondent has been working in public protection for 10 years with the last two as manager of a team responsible for approximately one third of the police force area. The respondent is also connected with the missing persons' research agenda.

Interview Seven:

Eyda - Officer (constable) with nine years' service, eight of which have been served on 'response' and now as a 'prevent' officer ('Prevention' is a term used in many police forces to describe neighbourhood policing and neighbourhood specialist teams). Experienced in problem-solving and intelligence-led policing, much of the time spent on response was investigating missing persons' cases. The respondent is working in mainly rural police force which is in an alliance with a neighbouring police force. Police force has significant problems in its large urban areas.

Interview Eight:

Jack - Police inspector managing largely rural area 'prevention' teams and supporting the district commander in partnership with several local authorities. The inspector also carries duties as a 'response' inspector (critical incident manager). With 19 years' service, the respondent has experience in patrol work, tactical firearms operations, and has spent nine years in neighbourhood policing leading up to the current role. The respondent is working in mainly rural police force which is in an alliance with a neighbouring police force. Police force has significant problems in its large urban areas.

Interview Nine:

Keith - Officer (constable) with nine years' experience, eight of which have been as a response officer and now latterly as a crime prevention officer (see description of 'prevent' officer above), responsible for intelligence-led operations around human trafficking, gang violence and the execution of drugs warrants. The respondent is working in mainly rural police force which is in an alliance with a neighbouring police force. Police force has significant problems in its large urban areas.



|    |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |
|----|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|
| 36 | not real police work   | 2 |   | 2 |   |   |   |   |   | 9 |   |  |
| 37 | distrust of police staff employed by other police                  | 1 |   | 2 |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |
| 38 | agency responsibilities  | 6 | 1 |   |   | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |   |  |
| 39 | joint enquiries  | 5 | 1 |   |   |   | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |   |  |
| 40 | repeat missing   | 6 |   | 2 | 3 |   | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | broken windows' argument (9)                |  |
| 41 | why spend time on non-repeats - wasting resources                  | 1 |   | 2 |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |
| 42 | parental responsibility  | 3 | 1 |   |   | 5 | 6 |   |   |   |   |  |
| 43 | pan-area protocol  | 1 | 1 |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |
| 44 | style of investigations (eg. at desk)                              | 2 | 1 |   |   |   |   | 7 |   |   |   |  |
| 45 | automatic, rote procedures   | 6 |   | 2 | 4 |   | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | roboticism                                  | procedural justice and natural conversations |
| 46 | box-ticking  | 4 |   | 2 |   |   |   | 7 | 8 | 9 |   |  |
| 47 | cuffing' reports   | 3 |   | 2 | 4 |   | 6 |   |   |   |   |  |
| 48 | administrative exercises   | 3 |   | 2 |   |   |   | 7 |   | 9 |   |  |
| 49 | people expected to wait to report before reporting                 | 1 | 1 |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |
| 50 | misconceptions of past   | 2 | 1 |   |   |   | 6 |   |   |   |   |  |
| 51 | preparedness to report to police                                   | 4 | 1 |   |   | 5 | 6 | 7 |   |   |   |  |
| 52 | judgement calls before reporting to police (care homes)            | 3 | 1 |   |   |   |   | 7 |   | 9 |   |  |
| 53 | trust and confidence in police                                     | 6 | 1 |   | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |   |   |  |
| 54 | appropriate police response  | 5 | 1 |   |   | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |   |   |  |
| 55 | background (victimology)   | 3 | 1 |   |   |   | 6 | 7 |   |   |   |  |
| 56 | data only as good people input (RIRO)                              | 1 | 1 |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |
| 57 | quality of interview   | 5 | 1 |   | 4 |   | 6 | 7 |   | 9 |   |  |
| 58 | victim contracts (search)  | 1 | 1 |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |
| 59 | focus on the family  | 2 | 1 |   |   |   |   | 7 |   |   |   |  |
| 60 | effective handovers shift to shift                                 | 2 | 1 |   |   |   |   |   | 8 |   |   |  |
| 61 | forms for info sharing   | 2 | 1 |   |   |   | 6 |   |   |   |   |  |
| 62 | closing records when person found                                  | 2 | 1 | 2 |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |
| 63 | closed records not shown on home screen                            | 2 | 1 | 2 |   |   |   |   |   |   | poor administration of events on IT systems |  |
| 64 | triggers causing a missing event                                   | 2 | 1 |   |   |   | 6 |   |   |   | insufficiency of recording processes        |  |
| 65 | duplication of records   | 2 |   |   | 4 |   | 6 |   |   |   | data quality issues                         |  |
| 66 | mitigation measures to prevent missing events                      | 3 | 1 |   |   |   | 6 | 7 |   |   | time used in maintaining databases          |  |
| 67 | formal scheduled reviews   | 3 | 1 |   | 4 |   |   | 7 |   |   |   |  |
| 68 | LTCR - going through motions and back to bed                       | 4 |   | 2 | 4 | 5 | 6 |   |   |   |   |  |
| 69 | specific timelines   | 4 | 1 |   | 4 | 5 | 6 |   |   |   |   |  |
| 70 | organisational learning  | 5 | 1 |   | 4 | 5 | 6 |   | 8 |   |   |  |
| 71 | humanity and lack of humanity (expressed by police)                | 6 | 1 | 2 |   |   | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |   |  |
| 72 | victim contracts (search)  | 1 | 1 |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |
| 73 | visual representation of missing person (picture in happier times) | 2 | 1 |   | 4 |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |
| 74 | the 'person' is dragged out over days of interviews                | 1 |   | 2 |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |
| 75 | determinants of missing  | 5 | 1 |   | 3 | 4 |   | 6 | 7 |   |   |  |
| 76 | circumstances leading up to missing event                          | 5 | 1 |   | 3 |   |   | 6 | 7 |   | 9   |  |
| 77 | number of different reasons  | 3 | 1 |   | 3 |   |   |   | 7 |   |   |  |



|     |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |
|-----|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|
| 78  | formulation of hypotheses                                    | 6 | 1 |   | 3 | 4 | 5 |   | 7 | 8 |   | generalisations versus knowledge                  |  |
| 79  | self-harm  | 3 | 1 |   | 3 |   |   | 6 |   |   |   |   |  |
| 80  | at hands of a third party                                    | 1 | 1 |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |
| 81  | confidence of search   | 1 | 1 |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | publicity   |  |
| 82  | high priority areas for search                               | 3 | 1 |   | 3 |   |   |   |   | 8 |   |   |  |
| 83  | aligning resources to investigation                          | 6 | 1 |   | 3 |   | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |   |   |  |
| 84  | pigeon-holing  | 4 | 1 |   | 3 |   |   | 6 |   | 8 |   |   |  |
| 85  | categorisation as a starter for ten                          | 6 | 1 |   | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |   | 8 |   |   |  |
| 86  | over-usage of categories                                     | 5 |   | 2 | 3 | 4 |   | 6 |   | 8 |   |   |  |
| 87  | decisions only as good as info available                     | 1 | 1 |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |
| 88  | welfare over-rides privacy for publicity                     | 7 | 1 | 2 | 3 |   | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |   |   |  |
| 89  | vulnerability over-rides reluctance to publicise             | 8 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |   |   |  |
| 90  | family or NOK consent for publicity                          | 7 | 1 |   | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |   |   |  |
| 91  | in the best interests of the person missing                  | 4 |   |   | 3 |   | 5 | 6 | 7 |   |   |   |  |
| 92  | reputational issues for police                               | 6 | 1 | 2 |   | 4 | 5 | 6 |   | 8 |   |   |  |
| 93  | publicity strategies   | 6 | 1 | 2 |   |   | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |   |   |  |
| 94  | possibility of return to normality after event and publicity | 4 | 1 |   |   |   | 5 | 6 | 7 |   |   |   |  |
| 95  | clearing heads and confronted by publicity                   | 5 | 1 |   | 3 |   | 5 | 6 | 7 |   |   |   |  |
| 96  | referrals to other agencies                                  | 5 |   | 2 |   | 4 |   | 6 | 7 | 8 |   |   |  |
| 97  | pressure for success by leadership                           | 3 |   | 2 |   |   | 5 |   |   | 8 |   |   |  |
| 98  | effective leadership and management at a senior level        | 4 |   | 2 |   | 4 | 5 | 6 |   |   |   |   |  |
| 99  | misunderstanding of the problems                             | 3 |   |   |   | 4 |   | 6 | 7 |   |   |   |  |
| 100 | subjective assessments converted to objective with data      | 2 |   | 2 |   | 4 |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |
| 101 | police being seen to be doing something                      | 4 |   | 2 |   |   |   | 6 | 7 | 8 |   | police effectiveness                              |  |
| 102 | wasteful and unnecessary use of resources                    | 1 |   | 2 |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |
| 103 | empathetic sightings   | 1 |   | 2 |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |
| 104 | how well to you really know someone                          | 4 |   | 2 |   | 4 |   | 6 | 7 |   |   |   |  |
| 105 | resilience within families                                   | 3 |   | 2 |   |   |   | 6 | 7 |   |   |   |  |
| 106 | families need to know where the family members are           | 4 |   | 2 |   | 4 |   | 6 | 7 |   |   |   |  |
| 107 | people should be allowed to do what they like                | 5 |   | 2 | 3 | 4 |   | 6 | 7 |   |   |   |  |
| 108 | language used  | 7 | 1 | 2 | 3 |   | 5 | 6 |   | 8 | 9 | issues with language described and used by police |  |
| 109 | 'hidden' people in reporting                                 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |   | 6 |   |   |   |   |  |
| 110 | going missing seen as a 'crime'                              | 2 |   |   |   | 4 |   |   | 7 |   |   |   |  |
| 111 | bland presentation of stats and numbers                      | 2 |   |   |   | 4 | 5 |   |   |   |   |   |  |
| 112 | evidence base  | 5 |   |   |   | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |   | 9 | intelligence-led policing; problem-solving        |  |
| 113 | bias and unconscious bias                                    | 2 |   |   | 3 |   | 5 |   |   |   |   |   |  |
| 114 | officer wellbeing and work generated stress                  | 3 |   |   | 3 |   |   | 6 |   |   | 9 |   |  |
| 115 | volunteer groups - ALSAR                                     | 1 |   |   | 3 |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |
| 116 | emotional attachment   | 3 |   |   | 3 |   |   | 6 |   |   | 9 |   |  |



|    |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |
|----|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|
| 34 | agency responsibilities  | G | 6 | 1 |   |   |   | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |   |  |
| 35 | joint enquiries  | G | 5 | 1 |   |   |   |   | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |   |  |
| 36 | repeat missing   | K | 6 |   | 2 | 3 |   |   | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | broken windows' argument (9)                |  |
| 37 | parental responsibility  | L | 3 | 1 |   |   |   | 5 | 6 |   |   |   |   |  |
| 38 | style of investigations (eg. at desk)                              | J | 2 | 1 |   |   |   |   |   | 7 |   |   |   |  |
| 39 | automatic, rote procedures   | H | 6 |   | 2 |   | 4 |   | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | roboticism                                  | procedural justice and natural conversations |
| 40 | box-ticking  | H | 4 |   | 2 |   |   |   |   | 7 | 8 | 9 |   |  |
| 41 | cuffing' reports   | H | 3 |   | 2 |   | 4 |   | 6 |   |   |   |   |  |
| 42 | administrative exercises   | H | 3 |   | 2 |   |   |   |   | 7 |   | 9 |   |  |
| 43 | people expected to wait to report before reporting                 | I | 1 | 1 |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |
| 44 | misconceptions of past   | I | 2 | 1 |   |   |   |   | 6 |   |   |   |   |  |
| 45 | preparedness to report to police                                   | I | 4 | 1 |   |   |   | 5 | 6 | 7 |   |   |   |  |
| 46 | judgement calls before reporting to police (care homes)            | I | 3 | 1 |   |   |   |   |   | 7 |   | 9 |   |  |
| 47 | trust and confidence in police                                     | J | 6 | 1 |   |   | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |   |   |  |
| 48 | appropriate police response  | J | 5 | 1 |   |   |   | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |   |   |  |
| 49 | background (victimology)   | J | 3 | 1 |   |   |   |   | 6 | 7 |   |   |   |  |
| 50 | quality of interview   | J | 5 | 1 |   |   | 4 |   | 6 | 7 |   | 9 |   |  |
| 51 | focus on the family  | L | 2 | 1 |   |   |   |   |   | 7 |   |   |   |  |
| 52 | effective handovers shift to shift                                 | J | 2 | 1 |   |   |   |   |   |   | 8 |   |   |  |
| 53 | forms for info sharing   | D | 2 | 1 |   |   |   |   | 6 |   |   |   |   |  |
| 54 | closing records when person found                                  | J | 2 | 1 | 2 |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |
| 55 | closed records not shown on home screen                            | B | 2 | 1 | 2 |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | poor administration of events on IT systems |  |
| 56 | triggers causing a missing event                                   | A | 2 | 1 |   |   |   |   | 6 |   |   |   | insufficiency of recording processes        |  |
| 57 | duplication of records   | B | 2 |   |   |   | 4 |   | 6 |   |   |   | data quality issues                         |  |
| 58 | mitigation measures to prevent missing events                      | K | 3 | 1 |   |   |   |   | 6 | 7 |   |   | time used in maintaining databases          |  |
| 59 | formal scheduled reviews   | J | 3 | 1 |   |   | 4 |   |   | 7 |   |   |   |  |
| 60 | LTCR - going through motions and back to bed                       | H | 4 |   | 2 |   | 4 | 5 | 6 |   |   |   |   |  |
| 61 | specific timelines   | J | 4 | 1 |   |   | 4 | 5 | 6 |   |   |   |   |  |
| 62 | organisational learning  | M | 5 | 1 |   |   | 4 | 5 | 6 |   | 8 |   |   |  |
| 63 | humanity and lack of humanity (expressed by police)                | ? | 6 | 1 | 2 |   |   |   | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |   |  |
| 64 | visual representation of missing person (picture in happier times) | ? | 2 | 1 |   |   | 4 |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |
| 65 | determinants of missing  | A | 5 | 1 |   | 3 | 4 |   | 6 | 7 |   |   |   |  |
| 66 | circumstances leading up to missing event                          | A | 5 | 1 |   | 3 |   |   | 6 | 7 |   | 9 |   |  |
| 67 | number of different reasons  | A | 3 | 1 |   | 3 |   |   |   | 7 |   |   |   |  |
| 68 | formulation of hypotheses  | J | 6 | 1 |   | 3 | 4 | 5 |   | 7 | 8 |   | generalisations versus knowledge            |  |
| 69 | self-harm  | A | 3 | 1 |   | 3 |   |   | 6 |   |   |   | publicity                                   |  |
| 70 | high priority areas for search                                     | J | 3 | 1 |   | 3 |   |   |   |   | 8 |   |   |  |
| 71 | aligning resources to investigation                                | E | 6 | 1 |   | 3 |   | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |   |   |  |
| 72 | pigeon-holing  | N | 4 | 1 |   | 3 |   |   | 6 |   | 8 |   |   |  |
| 73 | categorisation as a starter for ten                                | N | 6 | 1 |   | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |   | 8 |   |   |  |
| 74 | over-usage of categories   | N | 5 |   | 2 | 3 | 4 |   | 6 |   | 8 |   |   |  |
| 75 | welfare over-rides privacy for publicity                           | O | 7 | 1 | 2 | 3 |   | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |   |   |  |

|     |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |   |
|-----|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|---|
| 76  | vulnerability over-rides reluctance to publicise             | O | 8 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |   |  |   |
| 77  | family or NOK consent for publicity                          | O | 7 | 1 |   | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |   |  |   |
| 78  | in the best interests of the person missing                  | O | 4 |   |   | 3 |   | 5 | 6 | 7 |   |   |  |   |
| 79  | reputational issues for police                               | J | 6 | 1 | 2 |   | 4 | 5 | 6 |   | 8 |   |  |   |
| 80  | publicity strategies   | O | 6 | 1 | 2 |   |   | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |   |  |   |
| 81  | possibility of return to normality after event and publicity | O | 4 | 1 |   |   |   | 5 | 6 | 7 |   |   |  |   |
| 82  | clearing heads and confronted by publicity                   | O | 5 | 1 |   | 3 |   | 5 | 6 | 7 |   |   |  |   |
| 83  | referrals to other agencies                                  | D | 5 |   | 2 |   | 4 |   | 6 | 7 | 8 |   |  |   |
| 84  | pressure for success by leadership                           | J | 3 |   | 2 |   |   | 5 |   |   | 8 |   |  |   |
| 85  | effective leadership and management at a senior level        | J | 4 |   | 2 |   | 4 | 5 | 6 |   |   |   |  |   |
| 86  | misunderstanding of the problems                             | J | 3 |   |   |   | 4 |   | 6 | 7 |   |   |  |   |
| 87  | subjective assessments converted to objective with data      | N | 2 |   | 2 |   | 4 |   |   |   |   |   |  |   |
| 88  | police being seen to be doing something                      | J | 4 |   | 2 |   |   |   | 6 | 7 | 8 |   | police effectiveness                       |   |
| 89  | wasteful and unnecessary use of resources                    | E | 1 |   | 2 |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |   |
| 90  | empathetic sightings   | E | 1 |   | 2 |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |   |
| 91  | how well to you really know someone                          | N | 4 |   | 2 |   | 4 |   | 6 | 7 |   |   |  |   |
| 92  | resilience within families                                   | L | 3 |   | 2 |   |   |   | 6 | 7 |   |   |  |   |
| 93  | families need to know where the family members are           | L | 4 |   | 2 |   | 4 |   | 6 | 7 |   |   |  |   |
| 94  | people should be allowed to do what they like                | L | 5 |   | 2 | 3 | 4 |   | 6 | 7 |   |   |  |   |
| 95  | language used  | Q | 7 |   | 1 | 2 | 3 |   | 5 | 6 |   | 8 | 9  | issues with language described and used by police |
| 96  | 'hidden' people in reporting                                 | B | 5 |   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |   | 6 |   |   |  |   |
| 97  | going missing seen as a 'crime'                              | J | 2 |   |   |   | 4 |   |   | 7 |   |   |  |   |
| 98  | bland presentation of stats and numbers                      | N | 2 |   |   |   | 4 | 5 |   |   |   |   |  |   |
| 99  | evidence base  | S | 5 |   |   |   | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |   | 9 | intelligence-led policing; problem-solving |   |
| 100 | bias and unconscious bias                                    | S | 2 |   |   | 3 |   | 5 |   |   |   |   |  |   |
| 101 | officer wellbeing and work generated stress                  | T | 3 |   |   | 3 |   |   | 6 |   |   | 9 |  |   |
| 102 | emotional attachment   | T | 3 |   |   | 3 |   |   | 6 |   |   | 9 |  |   |

## Second revision to coding structure

| Code no. | Basic themes  | Linking of themes towards organising themes | Times mentioned | Script no. |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | Organising themes | Superordinate themes |
|----------|---|---|-----------------|------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|-------------------|----------------------|
| 1        | vulnerabilities and threats - focus on risk - HEHR - THRME                              | A   | 9               | 1          | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |                   |                      |
| 2        | understanding and misunderstanding circumstances, determinants and triggers for missing | B   | 8               | 1          |   | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |                   |                      |
| 3        |   |   |                 |            |   |   |   |   |   | 7 |   |   |                   |                      |
| 4        | use of IT and case management systems   | C   | 6               | 1          | 2 |   | 4 | 5 | 6 |   | 8 |   |                   |                      |
| 5        | force geography, communities and populations  | D   | 5               | 1          |   |   |   | 5 | 6 | 7 |   | 9 |                   |                      |
| 6        | force alliances and collaborations  | D   | 8               | 1          | 2 | 3 | 4 |   | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |                   |                      |
| 7        | management of and resistance to change  | E   | 5               |            | 2 |   | 4 | 5 | 6 |   |   | 9 |                   |                      |
| 8        | cultural approach (police culture)  | E   | 5               |            |   |   |   | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |                   |                      |
| 9        | trust and confidence in police  | F   | 6               | 1          |   |   | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |   |                   |                      |
| 10       | organisational learning   | F   | 5               | 1          |   |   | 4 | 5 | 6 |   | 8 |   |                   |                      |
| 11       | reputational issues for police  | F   | 6               | 1          | 2 |   | 4 | 5 | 6 |   | 8 |   |                   |                      |
| 12       | police being seen to be doing something   | G   | 4               |            | 2 |   |   |   | 6 | 7 | 8 |   |                   |                      |
| 13       | pressure for success by leadership  | G   | 3               |            | 2 |   |   | 5 |   |   | 8 |   |                   |                      |
| 14       | effective leadership and management at a senior level                                   | G   | 4               |            | 2 |   | 4 | 5 | 6 |   |   |   |                   |                      |
| 15       | coverage of high risk cases   | H   | 5               | 1          |   | 3 |   |   | 6 |   | 8 | 9 |                   |                      |
| 16       | high risk raised through to senior levels   | H   | 6               | 1          |   |   | 4 |   | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |                   |                      |
| 17       | priorities (of task and actions) and of police  | H   | 8               |            | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |                   |                      |
| 18       | proportionality   | H   | 5               | 1          |   |   |   |   | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |                   |                      |
| 19       | balance   | H   | 5               | 1          |   |   |   |   | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |                   |                      |
| 20       | grip exercised in investigations  | H   | 1               |            |   | 3 |   |   |   |   |   |   |                   |                      |
| 21       | guidance and compliance with guidance & APP   | I   | 7               |            | 2 |   | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |                   |                      |
| 22       | appropriate police response & aligning resources to investigation                       | I   | 5               | 1          |   | 3 |   | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |   |                   |                      |
| 23       | style of investigations (eg. at desk)   | I   | 2               | 1          |   |   |   |   |   | 7 |   |   |                   |                      |
| 24       | effective handovers shift to shift  | I   | 2               | 1          |   |   |   |   |   |   | 8 |   |                   |                      |
| 25       | formal scheduled reviews and specific timelines   | I   | 3               | 1          |   |   | 4 |   |   | 7 |   |   |                   |                      |
| 26       | formulation of hypotheses & high priority areas for search                              | I   | 6               | 1          |   | 3 | 4 | 5 |   | 7 | 8 |   |                   |                      |

|    |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |  |
|----|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|--|
| 27 | resources available and allocation, drain on resources, making do and wasteful and unnecessary use of resources         | J | 8 |   | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |  |  |
| 28 | reducing demand   | J | 8 | 1 | 2 | 3 |   | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |  |  |
| 29 | missing seen as a nuisance, not real police work, role of police  | J | 4 | 1 | 2 |   |   | 5 |   |   |   | 9 |  |  |
| 30 | empathetic sightings  | J | 1 |   | 2 |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |  |
| 31 | partnership structures, agency responsibilities   | K | 6 | 1 |   |   | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |  |  |
| 32 | agreements and protocols, info and data sharing   | K | 8 | 1 | 2 |   | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |  |  |
| 33 | joint enquiries, referral to other agencies   | K | 5 | 1 | 2 |   | 4 |   | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |  |  |
| 34 | repeat missing, mitigation measures to prevent missing events   | L | 7 | 1 | 2 | 3 |   |   | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |  |  |
| 35 | parental responsibility   | L | 3 | 1 |   |   |   | 5 | 6 |   |   |   |  |  |
| 36 | automatic, rote procedures, box-ticking, cuffing reports, admin exercises & LTR - going through motions and back to bed | M | 6 |   | 2 |   | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |  |  |
| 37 | 'hidden' people in reporting  | N | 5 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |   | 6 |   |   |   |  |  |
| 38 | misconceptions of past and people expected to wait to report before reporting   | N | 2 | 1 |   |   |   |   | 6 |   |   |   |  |  |
| 39 | preparedness to report to police and judgement calls before reporting to police (care homes)                            | N | 4 | 1 |   |   |   | 5 | 6 | 7 |   | 9 |  |  |
| 40 | background (victimology)  | O | 3 | 1 |   |   |   |   | 6 | 7 |   |   |  |  |
| 41 | quality of interview  | O | 5 | 1 |   |   | 4 |   | 6 | 7 |   | 9 |  |  |
| 42 | focus on the family   | O | 2 | 1 |   |   |   |   |   | 7 |   |   |  |  |
| 43 | how well to you really know someone   | O | 4 |   | 2 |   | 4 |   | 6 | 7 |   |   |  |  |
| 44 | resilience within families  | O | 3 |   | 2 |   |   |   | 6 | 7 |   |   |  |  |
| 45 | families need to know where the family members are  | O | 4 |   | 2 |   | 4 |   | 6 | 7 |   |   |  |  |
| 46 | people should be allowed to do what they like   | O | 5 |   | 2 | 3 | 4 |   | 6 | 7 |   |   |  |  |
| 47 | visual representation of missing person (picture in happier times)  | O | 2 | 1 |   |   | 4 |   |   |   |   |   |  |  |
| 48 | humanity and lack of humanity (expressed by police)   | O | 6 | 1 | 2 |   |   |   | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |  |  |
| 49 | going missing seen as a 'crime'   | O | 2 |   |   |   | 4 |   |   | 7 |   |   |  |  |
| 50 | bland presentation of stats and numbers   | O | 2 |   |   |   | 4 | 5 |   |   |   |   |  |  |
| 51 | pigeon-holing   | P | 4 | 1 |   | 3 |   |   | 6 |   | 8 |   |  |  |
| 52 | categorisation as a starter for ten   | P | 6 | 1 |   | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |   | 8 |   |  |  |
| 53 | over-usage of categories  | P | 5 |   | 2 | 3 | 4 |   | 6 |   | 8 |   |  |  |
| 54 | subjective assessments converted to objective with data   | P | 2 |   | 2 |   | 4 |   |   |   |   |   |  |  |
| 55 | bias and unconscious bias   | P | 2 |   |   | 3 |   | 5 |   |   |   |   |  |  |
| 56 | welfare and vulnerability over-rides privacy for publicity  | Q | 7 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |   |  |  |
| 57 | family or NOK consent for publicity   | Q | 7 | 1 |   | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |   |  |  |

|    |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |  |
|----|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|--|
| 58 | in the best interests of the person missing   | Q | 4 |   |   | 3 |   | 5 | 6 | 7 |   |   |  |  |
| 59 | publicity strategies  | Q | 6 | 1 | 2 |   |   | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |   |  |  |
| 60 | possibility of return to normality after event and publicity and clearing heads and confronted by publicity | Q | 4 | 1 |   | 3 |   | 5 | 6 | 7 |   |   |  |  |
|    |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |  |
| 61 | training (for PolSAs, etc.)   | R | 4 |   | 2 | 3 | 4 |   |   |   | 8 |   |  |  |
|    |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |  |
| 62 | language used   | S | 7 | 1 | 2 | 3 |   | 5 | 6 |   | 8 | 9 |  |  |
|    |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |  |
| 63 | evidence base   | T | 5 |   |   |   | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |   | 9 |  |  |
|    |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |  |
| 64 | officer wellbeing and work generated stress, emotional attachment   | U | 3 |   |   | 3 |   |   | 6 |   |   | 9 |  |  |

Possible organising themes

|   |
|---|
| safeguarding structures                           |
| range of vulnerabilities                          |
| IT systems - how much do you know?                |
| cases 'hide' in systems                           |
| lack of consistency of policy/procedures          |
| implementation of change                          |
| risk assessment/identification of risk            |
| resources and availability                        |
| dedicated teams understand 'missing'              |
| search as part of investigation                   |
| broken windows' argument (9)                      |
| roboticism  |
| poor administration of events on IT systems       |
| insufficiency of recording processes              |
| data quality issues                               |
| time used in maintaining databases                |
| generalisations versus knowledge                  |
| police effectiveness                              |
| issues with language described and used by police |
| intelligence-led policing; problem-solving        |

Possible super-ordinate themes

|   |
|---|
| IT systems                                    |
| force infrastructures/partner infrastructures |
| investigations vs. safeguarding               |
| procedural justice and natural conversations  |
| publicity                                     |

## Third revision to coding structure

| Code no. | Basic themes  | Linking of themes towards organising themes | Times mentioned | Script no. |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | Organising themes                                | Superordinate themes  |
|----------|---|---|-----------------|------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|---|
| 1        | vulnerabilities and threats - focus on risk - HEHR - THRME                              | A   | 9               | 1          | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 1. assessment of risk                            |   |
| 2        | understanding and misunderstanding circumstances, determinants and triggers for missing | B   | 8               | 1          |   | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 2. understanding the determinants of missing     |   |
| 3        |   |   |                 |            |   |   |   |   |   | 7 |   |   |  |   |
| 4        | use of IT and case management systems   | C   | 6               | 1          | 2 |   | 4 | 5 | 6 |   | 8 |   | 3. use of case management systems                |   |
| 5        | force geography, communities and populations  | D   | 5               | 1          |   |   |   | 5 | 6 | 7 |   | 9 | 4. understanding and serving diverse communities |   |
| 6        | force alliances and collaborations  | D   | 8               | 1          | 2 | 3 | 4 |   | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |  | A. the police organisation (collects org themes 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, 18, 19, and 20) |
| 7        | management of and resistance to change  | E   | 5               |            | 2 |   | 4 | 5 | 6 |   |   | 9 | 5. police culture                                |   |
| 8        | cultural approach (police culture)  | E   | 5               |            |   |   |   | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |  |   |
| 9        | trust and confidence in police  | F   | 6               | 1          |   |   | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |   | 6. trust, confidence and reputation              |   |
| 10       | organisational learning   | F   | 5               | 1          |   |   | 4 | 5 | 6 |   | 8 |   |  |   |
| 11       | reputational issues for police  | F   | 6               | 1          | 2 |   | 4 | 5 | 6 |   | 8 |   |  |   |
| 12       | police being seen to be doing something   | G   | 4               |            | 2 |   |   |   | 6 | 7 | 8 |   | 7. police leadership                             |   |
| 13       | pressure for success by leadership  | G   | 3               |            | 2 |   |   | 5 |   |   | 8 |   |  |   |
| 14       | effective leadership and management at a senior level                                   | G   | 4               |            | 2 |   | 4 | 5 | 6 |   |   |   |  |   |
| 15       | coverage of high risk cases   | H   | 5               | 1          |   | 3 |   |   | 6 |   | 8 | 9 | 8. grip in investigations                        | B. police work (collects org themes 1, 2, 3, 8, 9 and 13 16)                    |
| 16       | high risk raised through to senior levels   | H   | 6               | 1          |   |   | 4 |   | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |  |   |
| 17       | priorities (of task and actions) and of police  | H   | 8               |            | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |  |   |
| 18       | proportionality   | H   | 5               | 1          |   |   |   |   | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |  |   |
| 19       | balance   | H   | 5               | 1          |   |   |   |   | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |  |   |
| 20       | grip exercised in investigations  | H   | 1               |            |   | 3 |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |   |
| 21       | guidance and compliance with guidance & APP   | I   | 7               |            | 2 |   | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 9. conduct of investigations                     |   |
| 22       | appropriate police response & aligning resources to investigation                       | I   | 6               | 1          |   | 3 |   | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |   |  |   |



|    |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|----|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 23 | style of investigations (eg. at desk)  | I | 2 | 1 |   |   |   |   | 7 |   |   |   |   |
| 24 | effective handovers shift to shift   | I | 2 | 1 |   |   |   |   | 8 |   |   |   |   |
| 25 | formal scheduled reviews and specific timelines  | I | 3 | 1 |   |   | 4 |   | 7 |   |   |   |   |
| 26 | formulation of hypotheses & high priority areas for search   | I | 6 | 1 |   | 3 | 4 | 5 | 7 | 8 |   |   |   |
| 27 | resources available and allocation, drain on resources, making do and wasteful and unnecessary use of resources          | J | 8 |   | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10. resources and demand                          |
| 28 | reducing demand  | J | 8 | 1 | 2 | 3 |   | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |   |
| 29 | missing seen as a nuisance, not real police work, role of police   | J | 4 | 1 | 2 |   |   | 5 |   |   |   | 9 |   |
| 30 | empathetic sightings   | J | 1 |   | 2 |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 31 | partnership structures, agency responsibilities  | K | 7 | 1 |   |   | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 11. partnerships                                  |
| 32 | agreements and protocols, info and data sharing  | K | 8 | 1 | 2 |   | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | C. shared work (collects org themes 11 and 12)    |
| 33 | joint enquiries, referral to other agencies  | K | 7 | 1 | 2 |   | 4 |   | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |   |
| 34 | repeat missing, mitigation measures to prevent missing events  | L | 7 | 1 | 2 | 3 |   |   | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 12. reducing repeat missing episodes              |
| 35 | parental responsibility  | L | 3 | 1 |   |   |   | 5 | 6 |   |   |   |   |
| 36 | automatic, rote procedures, box-ticking, cuffing reports, admin exercises & LTCR - going through motions and back to bed | M | 7 |   | 2 |   | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 13. roboticism                                    |
| 37 | 'hidden' people in reporting   | N | 5 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |   | 6 |   |   |   | 14. reporting to the police                       |
| 38 | misconceptions of past and people expected to wait to report before reporting  | N | 2 | 1 |   |   |   |   | 6 |   |   |   | D. family matters (collects org themes 14 and 15) |
| 39 | preparedness to report to police and judgement calls before reporting to police (care homes)                             | N | 5 | 1 |   |   |   | 5 | 6 | 7 |   | 9 |   |
| 40 | background (victimology)   | O | 3 | 1 |   |   |   |   | 6 | 7 |   |   | 15. family concerns                               |
| 41 | quality of interview   | O | 5 | 1 |   |   | 4 |   | 6 | 7 |   | 9 |   |
| 42 | focus on the family  | O | 2 | 1 |   |   |   |   |   | 7 |   |   |   |
| 43 | how well to you really know someone  | O | 4 |   | 2 |   | 4 |   | 6 | 7 |   |   |   |
| 44 | resilience within families   | O | 3 |   | 2 |   |   |   | 6 | 7 |   |   |   |
| 45 | families need to know where the family members are   | O | 4 |   | 2 |   | 4 |   | 6 | 7 |   |   |   |
| 46 | people should be allowed to do what they like  | O | 5 |   | 2 | 3 | 4 |   | 6 | 7 |   |   |   |
| 47 | visual representation of missing person (picture in happier times)   | O | 2 | 1 |   |   | 4 |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 49 | going missing seen as a 'crime'  | O | 2 |   |   |   | 4 |   |   | 7 |   |   |   |
| 50 | pigeon-holing  | P | 4 | 1 |   | 3 |   |   | 6 |   | 8 |   | 16. issues with categorisation                    |
| 51 | categorisation as a starter for ten  | P | 6 | 1 |   | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |   | 8 |   |   |
| 52 | over-usage of categories   | P | 5 |   | 2 | 3 | 4 |   | 6 |   | 8 |   |   |
| 53 | subjective assessments converted to objective with data  | P | 2 |   | 2 |   | 4 |   |   |   |   |   |   |

|    |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |                        |  |
|----|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|------------------------|--|
| 54 | bland presentation of stats and numbers   | P | 2 |   |   |   | 4 | 5 |   |   |   |   |                        |  |
| 55 | bias and unconscious bias   | P | 2 |   |   | 3 |   | 5 |   |   |   |   |                        |  |
| 56 | welfare and vulnerability over-rides privacy for publicity  | Q | 8 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |   | 17. publicity issues   | E. publicity (collects org theme 17 only as a stand alone s-o theme) |
| 57 | family or NOK consent for publicity   | Q | 7 | 1 |   | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |   |                        |  |
| 58 | in the best interests of the person missing   | Q | 4 |   |   | 3 |   | 5 | 6 | 7 |   |   |                        |  |
| 59 | publicity strategies  | Q | 6 | 1 | 2 |   |   | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |   |                        |  |
| 60 | possibility of return to normality after event and publicity and clearing heads and confronted by publicity | Q | 6 | 1 |   | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |   |   |                        |  |
| 61 | training (for PolSAs, etc.)   | R | 4 |   | 2 | 3 | 4 |   |   |   | 8 |   | 18. relevant training  |  |
| 62 | evidence base   | S | 5 |   |   |   | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |   | 9 | 19. EBP                |  |
| 63 | officer wellbeing and work generated stress, emotional attachment   | T | 3 |   |   | 3 |   |   | 6 |   |   | 9 | 20. officer well-being |  |

Possible organising themes

|   |
|---|
| safeguarding structures                           |
| range of vulnerabilities                          |
| IT systems - how much do you know?                |
| cases 'hide' in systems                           |
| lack of consistency of policy/procedures          |
| implementation of change                          |
| risk assessment/identification of risk            |
| resources and availability                        |
| dedicated teams understand 'missing'              |
| search as part of investigation                   |
| broken windows' argument (9)                      |
| roboticism  |
| poor administration of events on IT systems       |
| insufficiency of recording processes              |
| data quality issues                               |
| time used in maintaining databases                |
| generalisations versus knowledge                  |
| police effectiveness                              |
| issues with language described and used by police |
| intelligence-led policing; problem-solving        |

Possible super-ordinate themes

|   |
|---|
| IT systems                                    |
| force infrastructures/partner infrastructures |
| investigations vs. safeguarding               |

|  |
|--|
| procedural justice and natural conversations |
| publicity                                    |

## Fourth revision to coding structure—part 1

| Code no. | Basic themes  | Linking of themes towards organising themes | Times mentioned | Script no. |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  | Organising themes   | Superordinate themes |
|----------|---|---|-----------------|------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|---|----------------------|
| 1        | vulnerabilities and threats - focus on risk - HEIR - THRIVE   | A   | 9               | 1          | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 1. assessment of risk                        |   |                      |
| 2        | understanding and misunderstanding circumstances, determinants and triggers for missing                         | B   | 8               | 1          |   | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 2. understanding the determinants of missing |   |                      |
| 3        |   |   |                 |            |   |   |   |   |   | 7 |   |   |  |   |                      |
| 4        | use of IT and case management systems   | C   | 6               | 1          | 2 |   | 4 | 5 | 6 |   | 8 |   | 3. use of case management systems            |   |                      |
| 5        | coverage of high risk cases   | H   | 5               | 1          |   | 3 |   |   | 6 |   | 8 | 9 | 8. grip in investigations                    | B. police work (collects org themes 1, 2, 3, 8, 9 and 13 16)  |                      |
| 6        | high risk raised through to senior levels   | H   | 6               | 1          |   |   | 4 |   | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |  |   |                      |
| 7        | priorities (of task and actions) and of police  | H   | 8               |            | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |  |   |                      |
| 8        | proportionality   | H   | 5               | 1          |   |   |   |   | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |  |   |                      |
| 9        | balance   | H   | 5               | 1          |   |   |   |   | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |  |   |                      |
| 10       | grip exercised in investigations  | H   | 1               |            |   | 3 |   |   |   |   |   |   |  | Fourth rev notes:<br>check ROs<br>check all notes<br>check Tweet in EVN<br>insufficiently academic labelling<br>could remove culture to discourse analysis section in write up<br>could take out codes 7 - 11 in the same way |                      |
| 11       | guidance and compliance with guidance & APP   | I   | 7               |            | 2 |   | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 9. conduct of investigations                 |   |                      |
| 12       | appropriate police response & aligning resources to investigation   | I   | 6               | 1          |   | 3 |   | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |   |  |   |                      |
| 13       | style of investigations (eg. at desk)   | I   | 2               | 1          |   |   |   |   |   | 7 |   |   |  |   |                      |
| 14       | effective handovers shift to shift  | I   | 2               | 1          |   |   |   |   |   |   | 8 |   |  |   |                      |
| 15       | formal scheduled reviews and specific timelines   | I   | 3               | 1          |   |   | 4 |   |   | 7 |   |   |  |   |                      |
| 16       | formulation of hypotheses & high priority areas for search  | I   | 6               | 1          |   | 3 | 4 | 5 |   | 7 | 8 |   |  |   |                      |
| 17       | police being seen to be doing something   | J   | 4               |            | 2 |   |   |   | 6 | 7 | 8 |   | 7. police leadership                         |   |                      |
| 18       | resources available and allocation, drain on resources, making do and wasteful and unnecessary use of resources | J   | 8               |            | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10. resources and demand                     |   |                      |
| 19       | reducing demand   | J   | 8               | 1          | 2 | 3 |   | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |  |   |                      |
| 20       | missing seen as a nuisance, not real police work, role of police  | J   | 4               | 1          | 2 |   |   | 5 |   |   |   | 9 |  |   |                      |
| 21       | empathetic sightings  | J   | 1               |            | 2 |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |   |                      |
| 22       | partnership structures, agency responsibilities   | K   | 7               | 1          |   |   | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 11. partnerships                             | C. shared work (collects org themes 11 and 12)  |                      |
| 23       | agreements and protocols, info and data sharing   | K   | 8               | 1          | 2 |   | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |  |   |                      |
| 24       | joint enquiries, referral to other agencies   | K   | 7               | 1          | 2 |   | 4 |   | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |  |   |                      |
|          |   |   |                 |            |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |   |                      |

|    |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |                                      |  |
|----|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|--------------------------------------|--|
| 25 | repeat missing, mitigation measures to prevent missing events  | L | 7 | 1 | 2 | 3 |   |   | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 12. reducing repeat missing episodes |  |
| 26 | parental responsibility  | L | 3 | 1 |   |   |   | 5 | 6 |   |   |   |                                      |  |
| 27 | automatic, rote procedures, box-ticking, cuffing reports, admin exercises & LTCR - going through motions and back to bed | M | 7 |   | 2 |   | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 13. roboticism                       |  |
| 28 | 'hidden' people in reporting   | N | 5 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |   | 6 |   |   |   | 14. reporting to the police          | D. family matters (collects org themes 14 and 15)                    |
| 29 | misconceptions of past and people expected to wait to report before reporting  | N | 2 | 1 |   |   |   |   | 6 |   |   |   |                                      |  |
| 30 | preparedness to report to police and judgement calls before reporting to police (care homes)                             | N | 5 | 1 |   |   |   | 5 | 6 | 7 |   | 9 |                                      |  |
| 31 | background (victimology)   | O | 3 | 1 |   |   |   |   | 6 | 7 |   |   | 15. family concerns                  |  |
| 32 | quality of interview   | O | 5 | 1 |   |   | 4 |   | 6 | 7 |   | 9 |                                      |  |
| 33 | focus on the family  | O | 2 | 1 |   |   |   |   |   | 7 |   |   |                                      |  |
| 34 | how well to you really know someone  | O | 4 |   | 2 |   | 4 |   | 6 | 7 |   |   |                                      |  |
| 35 | resilience within families   | O | 3 |   | 2 |   |   |   | 6 | 7 |   |   |                                      |  |
| 36 | families need to know where the family members are   | O | 4 |   | 2 |   | 4 |   | 6 | 7 |   |   |                                      |  |
| 37 | people should be allowed to do what they like  | O | 5 |   | 2 | 3 | 4 |   | 6 | 7 |   |   |                                      |  |
| 38 | visual representation of missing person (picture in happier times)   | O | 2 | 1 |   |   | 4 |   |   |   |   |   |                                      |  |
| 39 | going missing seen as a 'crime'  | O | 2 |   |   |   | 4 |   |   | 7 |   |   |                                      |  |
| 40 | pigeon-holing  | P | 4 | 1 |   | 3 |   |   | 6 |   | 8 |   | 16. issues with categorisation       |  |
| 41 | categorisation as a starter for ten  | P | 6 | 1 |   | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |   | 8 |   |                                      |  |
| 42 | over-usage of categories   | P | 5 |   | 2 | 3 | 4 |   | 6 |   | 8 |   |                                      |  |
| 43 | subjective assessments converted to objective with data  | P | 2 |   | 2 |   | 4 |   |   |   |   |   |                                      |  |
| 44 | bland presentation of stats and numbers  | P | 2 |   |   |   | 4 | 5 |   |   |   |   |                                      |  |
| 45 | bias and unconscious bias  | P | 2 |   |   | 3 |   | 5 |   |   |   |   |                                      |  |
| 46 | welfare and vulnerability over-rides privacy for publicity   | Q | 8 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |   | 17. publicity issues                 | E. publicity (collects org theme 17 only as a stand alone s-o theme) |
| 47 | family or NOK consent for publicity  | Q | 7 | 1 |   | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |   |                                      |  |
| 48 | in the best interests of the person missing  | Q | 4 |   |   | 3 |   | 5 | 6 | 7 |   |   |                                      |  |
| 49 | publicity strategies   | Q | 6 | 1 | 2 |   |   | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |   |                                      |  |
| 50 | possibility of return to normality after event and publicity and clearing heads and confronted by publicity              | Q | 6 | 1 |   | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |   |   |                                      |  |
| 51 | training (for PolSAs, etc.)  | R | 4 |   | 2 | 3 | 4 |   |   |   | 8 |   | 18. relevant training                |  |
| 52 | evidence base  | S | 5 |   |   |   | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |   | 9 | 19. EBP                              |  |
| 53 | officer wellbeing and work generated stress, emotional attachment  | T | 3 |   |   | 3 |   |   | 6 |   |   | 9 | 20. officer well-being               |  |

Possible organising themes

|   |
|---|
| safeguarding structures                           |
| range of vulnerabilities                          |
| IT systems - how much do you know?                |
| cases 'hide' in systems                           |
| lack of consistency of policy/procedures          |
| implementation of change                          |
| risk assessment/identification of risk            |
| resources and availability                        |
| dedicated teams understand 'missing'              |
| search as part of investigation                   |
| broken windows' argument (9)                      |
| roboticism  |
| poor administration of events on IT systems       |
| insufficiency of recording processes              |
| data quality issues                               |
| time used in maintaining databases                |
| generalisations versus knowledge                  |
| police effectiveness                              |
| issues with language described and used by police |
| intelligence-led policing; problem-solving        |

Possible super-ordinate themes

|   |
|---|
| IT systems                                    |
| force infrastructures/partner infrastructures |
| investigations vs. safeguarding               |
| procedural justice and natural conversations  |
| publicity                                     |

## Fourth revision to coding structure—part 2

| Code no. | Basic themes  | Linking of themes towards organising themes | Times mentioned | Script no. |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  | Organising themes                      | Superordinate themes      |
|----------|---|---|-----------------|------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|--|---------------------------|
| 1        | vulnerabilities and threats - focus on risk - HEHR - THRME  | A   | 9               | 1          | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |  | 1. valuing the determinants of missing |                           |
| 2        | understanding and misunderstanding circumstances, determinants and triggers for missing                         | A   | 8               | 1          |   | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |  |  |                           |
| 3        | coverage of high risk cases   | H   | 5               | 1          |   | 3 |   |   | 6 |   | 8 | 9 |  | 2. grip: proportionality and balance   | A. Structural uncertainty |
| 4        | high risk raised through to senior levels   | H   | 6               | 1          |   |   | 4 |   | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |  |  |                           |
| 5        | priorities (of task and actions) and of police  | H   | 8               |            | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |  |  |                           |
| 6        | proportionality   | H   | 5               | 1          |   |   |   |   | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |  |  |                           |
| 7        | balance   | H   | 5               | 1          |   |   |   |   | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |  |  |                           |
| 8        | grip exercised in investigations  | H   | 1               |            |   | 3 |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |  |                           |
| 9        | guidance and compliance with guidance & APP   | I   | 7               |            | 2 |   | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |  | 3. the police response                 |                           |
| 10       | appropriate police response & aligning resources to investigation   | I   | 6               | 1          |   | 3 |   | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |   |  |  |                           |
| 11       | style of investigations (eg. at desk)   | I   | 2               | 1          |   |   |   |   |   | 7 |   |   |  |  |                           |
| 12       | effective handovers shift to shift  | I   | 2               | 1          |   |   |   |   |   |   | 8 |   |  |  |                           |
| 13       | formal scheduled reviews and specific timelines   | I   | 3               | 1          |   |   | 4 |   |   | 7 |   |   |  |  |                           |
| 14       | formulation of hypotheses & high priority areas for search  | I   | 6               | 1          |   | 3 | 4 | 5 |   | 7 | 8 |   |  |  |                           |
| 15       | training (for PoSAs, etc.)  | I   | 4               |            | 2 | 3 | 4 |   |   |   | 8 |   |  |  |                           |
| 16       | evidence base   | I   | 5               |            |   |   | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |   | 9 |  |  |                           |
| 17       | police being seen to be doing something   | J   | 4               |            | 2 |   |   |   | 6 | 7 | 8 |   |  |  |                           |
| 18       | resources available and allocation, drain on resources, making do and wasteful and unnecessary use of resources | J   | 8               |            | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |  |  |                           |
| 19       | reducing demand   | J   | 8               | 1          | 2 | 3 |   | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |  | 4 what does police work involve?       |                           |
| 20       | missing seen as a nuisance, not real police work, role of police  | J   | 4               | 1          | 2 |   |   | 5 |   |   |   | 9 |  |  |                           |
| 21       | empathetic sightings  | J   | 1               |            | 2 |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |  |                           |
| 22       | partnership structures, agency responsibilities   | K   | 7               | 1          |   |   | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |  | 5. sharing responsibilities            |                           |
| 23       | agreements and protocols, info and data sharing   | K   | 8               | 1          | 2 |   | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |  |  |                           |
| 24       | joint enquiries, referral to other agencies   | K   | 7               | 1          | 2 |   | 4 |   | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |  |  |                           |

|    |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |
|----|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|
| 25 | repeat missing, mitigation measures to prevent missing events  | K | 7 | 1 | 2 | 3 |   |   | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |  |
| 26 | parental responsibility  | K | 3 | 1 |   |   |   | 5 | 6 |   |   |   |  |
| 27 | automatic, rote procedures, box-ticking, cuffing reports, admin exercises & LTCR - going through motions and back to bed | M | 7 |   | 2 |   | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 6. roboticism                                |
| 28 | use of IT and case management systems  | N | 6 | 1 | 2 |   | 4 | 5 | 6 |   | 8 |   | 7. administration/bureaucracy of 'missing'   |
| 29 | hidden' people in reporting  | N | 5 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |   | 6 |   |   |   |  |
| 30 | misconceptions of past and people expected to wait to report before reporting  | N | 2 | 1 |   |   |   |   | 6 |   |   |   |  |
| 31 | preparedness to report to police and judgement calls before reporting to police (care homes)                             | N | 5 | 1 |   |   |   | 5 | 6 | 7 |   | 9 |  |
| 32 | background (victimology)   | O | 3 | 1 |   |   |   |   | 6 | 7 |   |   | 8. family narratives and emotional responses |
| 33 | quality of interview   | O | 5 | 1 |   |   | 4 |   | 6 | 7 |   | 9 |  |
| 34 | focus on the family  | O | 2 | 1 |   |   |   |   |   | 7 |   |   |  |
| 35 | how well to you really know someone  | O | 4 |   | 2 |   | 4 |   | 6 | 7 |   |   |  |
| 36 | resilience within families   | O | 3 |   | 2 |   |   |   | 6 | 7 |   |   |  |
| 37 | families need to know where the family members are   | O | 4 |   | 2 |   | 4 |   | 6 | 7 |   |   |  |
| 38 | people should be allowed to do what they like  | O | 5 |   | 2 | 3 | 4 |   | 6 | 7 |   |   |  |
| 39 | visual representation of missing person (picture in happier times)   | O | 2 | 1 |   |   | 4 |   |   |   |   |   |  |
| 40 | going missing seen as a 'crime'  | O | 2 |   |   |   | 4 |   |   | 7 |   |   |  |
| 41 | officer wellbeing and work generated stress, emotional attachment  | O | 3 |   |   | 3 |   |   | 6 |   |   | 9 |  |
| 42 | pigeon-holing  | P | 4 | 1 |   | 3 |   |   | 6 |   | 8 |   | 9. categorical problems                      |
| 43 | categorisation as a starter for ten  | P | 6 | 1 |   | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |   | 8 |   |  |
| 44 | over-usage of categories   | P | 5 |   | 2 | 3 | 4 |   | 6 |   | 8 |   |  |
| 45 | subjective assessments converted to objective with data  | P | 2 |   | 2 |   | 4 |   |   |   |   |   |  |
| 46 | bland presentation of stats and numbers  | P | 2 |   |   |   | 4 | 5 |   |   |   |   |  |
| 47 | bias and unconscious bias  | P | 2 |   |   | 3 |   | 5 |   |   |   |   |  |
| 48 | welfare and vulnerability over-rides privacy for publicity   | Q | 8 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |   | 10. duality of publicity                     |
| 49 | family or NOK consent for publicity  | Q | 7 | 1 |   | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |   |  |
| 50 | in the best interests of the person missing  | Q | 4 |   |   | 3 |   | 5 | 6 | 7 |   |   |  |
| 51 | publicity strategies   | Q | 6 | 1 | 2 |   |   | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |   |  |
| 52 | possibility of return to normality after event and publicity and clearing heads and confronted by publicity              | Q | 6 | 1 |   | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |   |   |  |

## Possible organising themes

safeguarding structures

range of vulnerabilities



|   |
|---|
| IT systems - how much do you know?                |
| cases 'hide' in systems                           |
| lack of consistency of policy/procedures          |
| implementation of change                          |
| risk assessment/identification of risk            |
| resources and availability                        |
| dedicated teams understand 'missing'              |
| search as part of investigation                   |
| broken windows' argument (9)                      |
| roboticism  |
| poor administration of events on IT systems       |
| insufficiency of recording processes              |
| data quality issues                               |
| time used in maintaining databases                |
| generalisations versus knowledge                  |
| police effectiveness                              |
| issues with language described and used by police |
| intelligence-led policing; problem-solving        |

Possible super-ordinate themes

|   |
|---|
| IT systems                                    |
| force infrastructures/partner infrastructures |
| investigations vs. safeguarding               |
| procedural justice and natural conversations  |
| publicity                                     |

## Fifth revision and final version of coding structure

| Code no. | Basic themes  | Linking of themes towards organising themes | Times mentioned | Script no. |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | Organising themes                              | Superordinate themes         |
|----------|---|---|-----------------|------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|------------------------------|
| 1        | vulnerabilities and threats - focus on risk - HEHR - THRME  | A   | 9               | 1          | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 1. valuing the determinants of 'missing'       |                              |
| 2        | understanding and misunderstanding circumstances, determinants and triggers for missing                         | A   | 8               | 1          |   | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |  |                              |
| 3        | coverage of high risk cases   | H   | 5               | 1          |   | 3 |   |   | 6 |   | 8 | 9 | 2. grip: proportionality and balance           | A. Structural uncertainty    |
| 4        | high risk raised through to senior levels   | H   | 6               | 1          |   |   | 4 |   | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |  |                              |
| 5        | priorities (of task and actions) and of police  | H   | 8               |            | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |  |                              |
| 6        | proportionality   | H   | 5               | 1          |   |   |   |   | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |  |                              |
| 7        | balance   | H   | 5               | 1          |   |   |   |   | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |  |                              |
| 8        | grip exercised in investigations  | H   | 1               |            |   | 3 |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |                              |
| 9        | guidance and compliance with guidance & APP   | I   | 7               |            | 2 |   | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 3. the police response - competing for service |                              |
| 10       | appropriate police response & aligning resources to investigation   | I   | 6               | 1          |   | 3 |   | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |   |  | B. Structural sanctification |
| 11       | style of investigations (eg. at desk)   | I   | 2               | 1          |   |   |   |   |   | 7 |   |   |  |                              |
| 12       | effective handovers shift to shift  | I   | 2               | 1          |   |   |   |   |   |   | 8 |   |  |                              |
| 13       | formal scheduled reviews and specific timelines   | I   | 3               | 1          |   |   | 4 |   |   | 7 |   |   |  |                              |
| 14       | formulation of hypotheses & high priority areas for search  | I   | 6               | 1          |   | 3 | 4 | 5 |   | 7 | 8 |   |  | C. Duality of (in)visibility |
| 15       | training (for PoSAs, etc.)  | I   | 4               |            | 2 | 3 | 4 |   |   |   | 8 |   |  |                              |
| 16       | evidence base   | I   | 5               |            |   |   | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |   | 9 |  |                              |
| 17       | police being seen to be doing something   | J   | 4               |            | 2 |   |   |   | 6 | 7 | 8 |   |  |                              |
| 18       | resources available and allocation, drain on resources, making do and wasteful and unnecessary use of resources | J   | 8               |            | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |  |                              |
| 19       | reducing demand   | J   | 8               | 1          | 2 | 3 |   | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 4. police work or social work?                 |                              |
| 20       | missing seen as a nuisance, not real police work, role of police  | J   | 4               | 1          | 2 |   |   | 5 |   |   |   | 9 |  |                              |
| 21       | empathetic sightings  | J   | 1               |            | 2 |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |                              |
| 22       | partnership structures, agency responsibilities   | K   | 7               | 1          |   |   | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 5. sharing responsibilities                    |                              |
| 23       | agreements and protocols, info and data sharing   | K   | 8               | 1          | 2 |   | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |  |                              |
| 24       | joint enquiries, referral to other agencies   | K   | 7               | 1          | 2 |   | 4 |   | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |  |                              |
| 25       | repeat missing, mitigation measures to prevent missing events   | K   | 7               | 1          | 2 | 3 |   |   | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |  |                              |

|    |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |
|----|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|
| 26 | parental responsibility  | K | 3 | 1 |   |   |   | 5 | 6 |   |   |   |   | D. Dilemmas: ethical, procedural and legal |
| 27 | automatic, rote procedures, box-ticking, cuffing reports, admin exercises & LTCR - going through motions and back to bed | M | 7 |   | 2 |   | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 6. roboticism   |  |
| 28 | use of IT and case management systems  | N | 6 | 1 | 2 |   | 4 | 5 | 6 |   | 8 |   | 7. administration/bureaucracy of 'missing'                |  |
| 29 | 'hidden' people in reporting   | N | 5 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |   | 6 |   |   |   |   |  |
| 30 | misconceptions of past and people expected to wait to report before reporting  | N | 2 | 1 |   |   |   |   | 6 |   |   |   |   |  |
| 31 | preparedness to report to police and judgement calls before reporting to police (care homes)                             | N | 5 | 1 |   |   |   | 5 | 6 | 7 |   | 9 |   |  |
| 32 | background (victimology)   | O | 3 | 1 |   |   |   |   | 6 | 7 |   |   | 8. family experiences, narratives and emotional responses |  |
| 33 | quality of interview   | O | 5 | 1 |   |   | 4 |   | 6 | 7 |   | 9 | E. Experiential - cultural (two spheres?)                 |  |
| 34 | focus on the family  | O | 2 | 1 |   |   |   |   |   | 7 |   |   |   |  |
| 35 | how well to you really know someone  | O | 4 |   | 2 |   | 4 |   | 6 | 7 |   |   |   |  |
| 36 | resilience within families   | O | 3 |   | 2 |   |   |   | 6 | 7 |   |   |   |  |
| 37 | families need to know where the family members are   | O | 4 |   | 2 |   | 4 |   | 6 | 7 |   |   |   |  |
| 38 | people should be allowed to do what they like  | O | 5 |   | 2 | 3 | 4 |   | 6 | 7 |   |   |   |  |
| 39 | visual representation of missing person (picture in happier times)   | O | 2 | 1 |   |   | 4 |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |
| 40 | going missing seen as a 'crime'  | O | 2 |   |   |   | 4 |   |   | 7 |   |   |   |  |
| 41 | officer wellbeing and work generated stress, emotional attachment  | O | 3 |   |   | 3 |   |   | 6 |   |   | 9 |   |  |
| 42 | pigeon-holing  | P | 4 | 1 |   | 3 |   |   | 6 |   | 8 |   | 9. issues with categorisation                             |  |
| 43 | categorisation as a starter for ten  | P | 6 | 1 |   | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |   | 8 |   |   |  |
| 44 | over-usage of categories   | P | 5 |   | 2 | 3 | 4 |   | 6 |   | 8 |   |   |  |
| 45 | subjective assessments converted to objective with data  | P | 2 |   | 2 |   | 4 |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |
| 46 | bland presentation of stats and numbers  | P | 2 |   |   |   | 4 | 5 |   |   |   |   |   |  |
| 47 | bias and unconscious bias  | P | 2 |   |   | 3 |   | 5 |   |   |   |   |   |  |
| 48 | welfare and vulnerability over-rides privacy for publicity   | Q | 8 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |   | 10. dichotomies of publicity                              |  |
| 49 | family or NOK consent for publicity  | Q | 7 | 1 |   | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |   |   |  |
| 50 | in the best interests of the person missing  | Q | 4 |   |   | 3 |   | 5 | 6 | 7 |   |   |   |  |
| 51 | publicity strategies   | Q | 6 | 1 | 2 |   |   | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |   |   |  |
| 52 | possibility of return to normality after event and publicity and clearing heads and confronted by publicity              | Q | 6 | 1 |   | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |   |   |   |  |